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LETTERS



Married...

Dear Spare Rib,

I wonder how many readers have come across the sort of discrimination I have experienced in the last few months.

When we first approached a Building Society for a mortgage assuring them of a joint income, the reliability of my role was questioned as I was of 'child-bearing' age and therefore (in their opinion) more than likely to stop work. When our application was finally accepted a penalty clause was added to our normal repayment stipulating that for the first two years, or for however long I worked within that period we were liable for an additional payment.

That was two years ago and we now have a 5 week old son. As a teacher I have taken statutory maternity leave but during this time we chose to continue our 'penalty payment'. We now wish to move so once again applied to a Building Society, this time to be told that my income was not reliable as I might discontinue work. We pointed out that we have a nanny to look after the baby and that in taking statutory leave I am under contract to return. Moreover, it seems that one's individual situation is simply not of any concern; there are blanket rulings whereby a woman seriously intending to combine career and marriage and who contributes jointly to the family income is of no consequence or interest.

We also encountered further discrimination when we came to register our son. The father is required to state his profession whilst it is assumed that the mother has none. The only time a woman's profession is acknowledged is if she happens to be unmarried. It is pointless to try and tackle individual registrars as they are bound by outdated legal tradition. In fact both my husband and myself having remonstrated with this particular female registrar were greeted with the caustic remark, "What are you - Women's Lib. or something?"

Best wishes,
D. Ludmila Fried - Booth.
Wolverhampton

Shoppers' rights

Dear Spare Rib,

People are frequently inhibited and misled by retailers when they buy goods which then prove defective. The retailer in fact does have an obligation to his customers, but most people seem to be unaware of exactly what it is. The shop-keeper,

for his part, often capitalises on this ignorance and the customer retreats with his useless article feeling defeated in the face of: "There is really nothing we can do about it, sorry".

I recently had a very intriguing experience with one of London's more expensive shoe shops. I purchased a pair of black patent sandals, costing £12. After wearing them three times a crack appeared on one of them. As I believed there was a case for having the sandals replaced I returned them to the shop. The manager discreetly took me aside, and in hushed tones explained that: "Patent leather is a delicate material, cracking is one of the risks you take in wearing it. We can do *nothing* except offer you a discount on the next pair of shoes you buy". I was in no mood to buy any more shoes and asked: "If one is exposed to risk in wearing your shoes, why don't you put a note inside the shoe box to warn your customers?" "Well Madam, some shops do just that, but not us. Now the one thing I will do for you, and as a gesture of good faith is to offer you a 20% discount in cash." So saying, he rushes away and returns with £2.50 which he seemed very anxious for me to accept.

Feeling rather overwhelmed by his attitude I tentatively asked if they could possibly repair the damaged sandal. "Yes Madam, we can do that" he replied. So I left, mystified by the £2.50 and optimistic that the repair would at least render them wearable. When I did not receive the sandals 10 days later the 'repair' consisted of a layer of invisible varnish being wiped over the crack. I tried them on and this time it was the varnish which cracked.

I telephoned the Consumer Association. They were extremely helpful and convinced me that I had indeed a case against the retailer. As the *Sale of Goods Act* clearly specifies that goods must be "fit for their purpose" - hence, shoes should survive being worn! They sent me all the information a scorned shopper needs for survival, including notes on how to sue through the County Court. I decided to confront the shop once again, this time filled with a degree more self-confidence to discover their reaction to the prospect of being sued. Same manager: "Yes Madam, you do and you don't have a case against us. The shoes are fit to be worn, the soles are not leaking, the problem is one of aesthetics. I do agree, they don't look very good, but they are quite wearable." Me: "I shall sue you". Manager: "That is your privilege". Once again I leave

this luxurious shop feeling defeated and humiliated.

Thinking over the situation later, an idea occurred to me. Why not write to the founder of the firm in Paris - in French - . Explain the whole situation to him and see what response it evoked. I did this, and posted a copy to the London shop. By return of post I received from the same London shop a letter of apology and assurances that if I would only return the sandals in question they would immediately give me a refund. Needless to say, this letter was not from the manager with whom I had dealt on previous occasions! So I did, in the end, get my money back.

Now what does all this prove? That patience, persistence and confidence in one's own ability to take a complaint to the highest level - if necessary - does pay off. But so many retailers rely on the ignorance and the complaint nature of their customers to palm unsatisfactory goods on to them. There are laws, of course, to protect customers. But how many people know about them? If they do, how many are prepared to act? An important move is to use organizations like the Consumers Association. They will tell you what your rights are and advise you what to do.

When you succeed, tell as many people as you can of your successes in getting satisfaction from retailers, and exactly how you did it. Another vitally important point is - don't accept any 'discounts' as this may later be used to prove that you, the customer, acquiesced in the situation and were willing to be placated by this offer.

Susan Holmes,
London W2.

Caution - distorting journalism

Dear Spare Rib,

I keep telling people about SR... it's a pity that a lot of newsagents don't stock SR. You really are a help, giving encouragement and lots of info to back up my constant arguments with people!

Do you remember a guy from the Evening News coming to see you? Well, I sued to work there and when they planned to do a series on women I just kept on at them about SR and brandishing back numbers in front of the journalists who were researching the series. (In fact, they found info in SR very helpful in their research). But it was absolutely incredible - though typical - that they didn't get round to seeing you before the end of the week prior to publication of the series.

Hopefully, through that mention, some more people are aware of your existence and will read SR. But I was disappointed to say the least in the finished product of the EN series. However, it is so typical of them: they usually manage to bodge up every good idea: and may be the fact that two men and only one woman were writing the series has some-

thing to do with it! (Mind you, the idea of a series was a man's in the first place, which is hopeful, I guess). Most men's attitudes send me out of my mind with anger and pain, but the attitudes of most male *journalists*: well, I'm sure I don't have to tell you about that! I know one of the guys on the series was pretty sympathetic towards women but the original idea seemed to get distorted somehow. I s'pose it was just too much to hope for that it would turn out good. You seem to be just about the only people getting somewhere in print in the UK.

More power to your elbows and *please* carry on.

Lots of love, luck
and best wishes,
Joyce Moss,
Streatham Hill,
London SW2.

Advertising

Dear Spare Rib,

In Spare Rib an openly, stupid sexist advert for an item that we are not likely to spend more money on (inflation disregarded) i.e. food, baby stuff, cosmetics etc. is harmless. It would improve your financial position and you would be able to avoid adverts which can make us spend money on rubbish (i.e. a film that we find worthless after having seen it because 'if S.R. advertises it, it can't be bad'). At the moment one can interpret the fact that you advertise something as a guarantee. A notice saying how desperate you are for money and that you don't 'necessarily approve' of the content of the advert will explain the contradictions between the adverts and the articles to puzzled readers.

All the best,
Andrea Duffy.

Woman v. woman

Dear Spare Rib,

I feel I must comment on Jennifer Gibbs letter, issue 27. Miss Gibbs' letter illustrates the lack of understanding and ignorance which exists between women who have a career and those who are housebound willingly or otherwise and bringing up children. It's too much a question of 'them and us'.

The fact that pedestrians have to dodge those with prams is merely common sense. Mothers do not shop at busy times of the day from choice, most of them have to fit in shopping with other things. The timetable of a mum can be frustratingly inflexible. The movement for the liberation of women and for the understanding of women by men and women is along way off, unless we can regard ourselves as at team and not as the 'breeders and the non-breeders'. It's not just the prejudices of men we have to contend with, but sadly *those of other women*.

Yours sincerely,
June A. Anderson.
Potters Bar.



Asian women arranged marriages

Dear Spare Rib,

I should like to put forward another point of view to the letter of Sara Jinha (Spare Rib No 26) British wives, foreign husbands.

I am 17 years old, lucky to have received some education in England - hopeful to become a nurse. I am a British Asian, my parents come from India, a village, the customs of that village are law in my home. I have three sisters, the youngest 14, the eldest 19. My father is contemplating finding four husbands in the village, they would come here and would get permission to stay because we are British. I am sure there must be hundreds of girls in our position. What can we do? What chance have we got to have even limited freedom? You talk of discrimination, few of you know what it is like to belong to a background such as ours. I myself may be luckier, because I have good friends who help, but when I see my sisters I worry. I read your magazine in the newspapers, I wouldn't dare buy it.

With love,
Name withheld.

D.H.S.S. once again

Dear Spare Rib,

I was interested to read your article "Out of Work" (Spare Rib 23), especially the section concerning supplementary benefit.

It would appear that the Department of Health and Social Security makes no allowance for women in my position who are perfectly entitled to supplementary benefit as *individuals*. However, because they cohabit with a man who has no entitlement to benefit, they have to find some other means of supporting themselves.

My own particular case is this: upon applying for supplementary benefit I was visited by a Social Security representative, who discovered that I was living with a man. He explained that my claim would have to be made through him. It was then revealed that he receives £20 per week, which, with by £7.35 unemployment benefit, amounted to a large enough sum to support both of us. Here I protested that I was in no way financially dependent on this man and never intended to be. But, as you know, in the eyes of the D.H.S.S. the mere fact that we live together as man and wife (ie. share the same bed!) means that he is supporting me financially. Finally, when my interviewer learned that my boyfriend is not a British citizen (he is

a Greek student, supported by his father), the whole case was dismissed, as this was a further reason why he (I) could not claim.

As a result of this I have resorted to "tempting" while seeking permanent employment.

I wonder how many other women have missed out entirely on supplementary benefit because their "cohabitant" has no entitlement to claim.

Incidentally, my interviewer implied that he did not agree with the "Victorian attitude" of the D.H.S.S. Perhaps we can hope that he and others will try to change things from inside.

Best Wishes,
Diana M. Claxton,
Glasgow.

Older Women's Liberation.

Dear Sisters,

The typical middle aged woman is a pain-in-the-neck (and often has one too). When she is not a bromide addict, she is insufferably and compulsively managing and a blight on every other personality around. She overburdens the Health Service with her psychosomatic illnesses and she may make a new career of having her parts removed. Husbands leave us; children loathe us. We get a bad press and we deserve it.

I'd like to hear from people interested in forming a group or a group and a network, dedicated to changing that image. I do not know of a group in this country like the American OWL (Older Women's Liberation), but I am sure it would have a part to play.

For some women in middle life there is a socially approved route out of the home back into the work force, perhaps via re-training. That may be fine in itself and something we should support, yet it is not enough. The sense of narrowing and limiting of life prospects may come in other ways that are harder to tackle. Most women are to some extent afraid of, or bewildered by middle age, including professional women whose work has turned into routine, women whose marriages have gone stale or collapsed, or whose independent sex life is no longer flourishing: some who are too conscious of what they have missed in life; others who want change but who fear that any change now must be for the worse. We generally feel that it is worse for us than for men and that we count for less in society than when we were younger (except as an appalling casualty rate).

Of course we can tackle our problems individually with the aid of psychiatrists and beauty parlours (if we have the money and the leisure for such fun). But that horrid image stands for us all and we shan't really shift it, in our own minds or in the minds of others unless we tackle it together. We needn't reject psychiatrists and beauticians, but we can learn to make better use of them and spread their benefits to more women.

Lets have a no-holds-barred group of

people who will come out with their worst nightmares and what they most want so that we can define our vital interests and push resignation and acceptance out of our road.

I thought of an over 35/40 group but really prefer to leave ages undefined. I myself felt much older and feebler at 33 than at 38 (having adopted a baby daughter in between) There's no need to identify exclusively with an Advanced group: we don't want to cut ourselves off more than we are cut off already.

If you think there is a worthwhile idea here, please write quickly and send a stamped addressed envelope. I'll be glad to receive views and suggestions as well as names. Please say if you are prepared to do some initial work to get us going and say if you have access to a typewriter or copying machine. Contact me immediately c/o Spare Rib, or Aware, 14 Radnor Terrace, London SW8, or directly at 40 Cork Road, Lancaster From 1st September.

Margery Morgan.

Condemned cottage

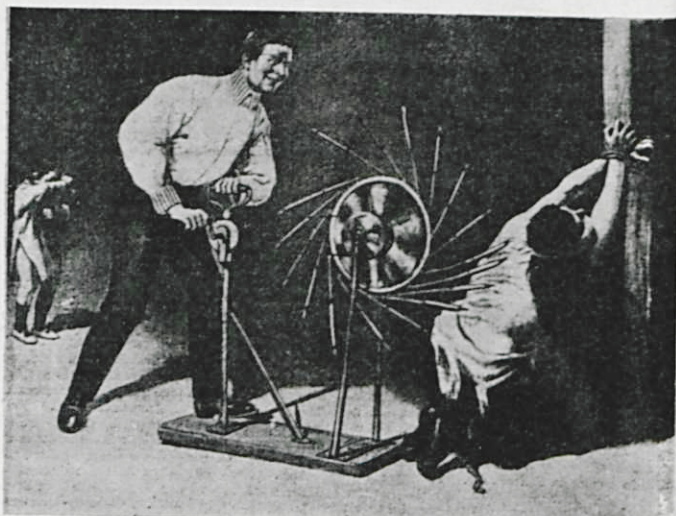
Dear Spare Rib,

I would like to draw your attention to the opening of Bath's newest museum. The Museum of Squalour. I am opening my 3 storey Gorgian cottage squat to show what the city council of Bath has deemed unfit for human habitation. There is nothing wrong with this cottage except the location of the drainpipes.

There are over 2,000 empty houses in Bath but the council won't part with them

Please come and see the opening of my museum if you'd like to Doss space available - bring bag.

Teri Marshall,
Cottage of Peace,
Hope and Prosperity,
3 Mt Beacon Cottage,
Mount Beacon Road,
Bath.



WIFE BEATING MACHINE INVENTED
BY A PROFESSOR AT CHAMPAIGN
UNIVERSITY

Prams, pushchairs and libraries

Dear Sisters and friends,

We are starting a national survey on the position of people looking after very young children and how they cope with libraries. We are particularly interested in hearing about people's experiences with prams and pushchairs in their local libraries and of any creches or similar arrangements in libraries that are provided for young children. We already have a couple of instances of people being stopped from bringing pushchairs and prams into library buildings. We would welcome copies of any correspondence that has been written to library authorities on this matter. May we also ask for information of any 'direct action' which has been undertaken on this and of any local groups willing to organise around this issue. We feel, as library workers that this is one example of discrimination against a substantial, mainly female, proportion of the population and are determined to make libraries places which welcome all people in the community.

Yours in struggle.
Anne Colwell & Richard Alexander

Anatomy

Dear Sisters,

Until recently I thought the 'penis envy' theory was nonsense and that the jealousy came from the freedom of upbringing afforded to boys. Now I am not so sure. After reading an article in a medical journal I realised that, although I had told my five-year-old boy what his baby sister *did not have*, I had not told him what she *did have*. He shouted with joy on hearing that she had a uterus and vagina inside in place of a penis and scrotum on the outside. In fact, in the ensuing anatomy lesson it was his turn to be jealous because she would be able to 'grow babies' until told of the importance of sperm.

I only hope that other mothers will learn as I have the importance of teaching their sons as well as their daughters of the existence of vaginas and uteruses. It's the lack of this knowledge that is dangerous.

Yours,
Jill Moore,
Ruislip, Middlesex.

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Please send a stamped addressed envelope with all unsolicited manuscripts.

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Olive Schreiner

Ruth First is researching a biography of Olive Schreiner, a South African novelist, feminist, socialist and free-thinker who wrote about the oppressive consequences of women's exclusion from productive labour at a time when most western feminists were absorbed in the struggle for the vote. Her sensitivity to women's sexual crippling and her dreams of freedom for women and for men, in real conflict with the contemporary bourgeois code of propriety, made her isolated in her own time but a living woman in ours.

Ruth First interviewed by Ann Scott.



What did Olive Schreiner know of the women's rights movements of Western Europe?

She knew Mrs Pankhurst and many of the leading women of the day. She loved Constance Lytton. The Pethick Lawrences visited her in South Africa. But she didn't see the women's question as being wrapped up in votes and votes only. Her book *Woman and Labour* relates to the division of labour in society. For during her formative years in England – in the 1880s – it was socialism she learned, and that was before Votes for Women.

At one time she was writing an introduction to Mary Wollstonecraft, and she writes to Havelock Ellis in 1888: "Will you tell me more about the mill hands – women – in the North. Do you think I'm too strong in saying that they are (almost?) equal to the men. That motherhood in them does not prevent them working and being jolly. Don't exaggerate, let it have the exact truth. This is so important in social questions, when one can so easily put things too strongly without being conscious of it. It's the exact truth that's so damned difficult to get at."

About the vote, she says: "I'm not so anxious for women to get the vote, as that they should keep on fighting for it, for it is the struggle that educates. A degraded and subject class or race gains much more by a fight for freedom than by having it given them." That's an advanced idea.

She had been the champion of the Boers at the time of the Boer War, she's the scourge of Cecil John Rhodes, who is the British Empire. But she realises after the Boer War that between them Boer and Briton are making a pact for the subordination of the African majority. And when in South Africa the Women's Enfranchisement League is formed, and she is a sponsor, she resigns in 1912 on a very important point of principle when they change the definition of women to read *white women*.

Although she was one of the founders of the Social Democratic Federation Women's League, and she could generally be expected to take an advanced position on matters of the day, one way or another she never worked consistently in a movement. Partly she was torn between the issues of two countries – or her life in two countries – but she struggled throughout her life to find discipline to write.

She also thinks that the women's movement is so vast, we've all got quite distinct work to do in it, and that she could do 20 or even 50 times as much for women's freedom by writing as by joining any society. Perhaps this rationalised her solitariness. She was alone, she felt alone. She needed solitariness to work, but when she found it in South Africa the isolation from people with like ideas depressed her.

Did she make links with African societies and African women then?

Only very indirectly. She had stray conversations with African women, but made no systematic study of their society or social institutions. Remember these are the days before serious anthropology, although she's read Herbert Spencer, and there are Morgan and Engels. She probably picked up more in contact with radical socialists than from reading marxism closely.

In any case, in her time in South Africa Africans were not seen to be people. They were creatures, or – in Afrikaans – *skepsels*. African movements and mass politics did not exist in her day. They were beginning when she died. But for most of her life it was very difficult, if not impossible, to have an equal contact with Africans or to get close enough to African society to study it.

There's this one conversation with an African woman that she frequently quotes, who says: "I don't believe there can be a God, because if there were He would not have created woman." Towards the end of her life she says: "I have not met one human being who feels at all on the native question as I do. There's so much one ought to do and I can't do it. I would love to go out among the natives and really enter into touch with them."

Can you explain some of the terms Olive uses in Woman and Labour: women's "parasitism", the New Woman, the New Man.

Woman and Labour dates from the very last period of her life: it comes out in 1911 but it's only a fragment – one of twelve chapters she had planned as a much longer book, much of which, she says, was lost during the Boer War. Resounding through the book is her demand, "We take all labour for our province". That's her slogan for women.

Her thesis is that women in industrialised society have been robbed of their productive function, of their capacity to do social labour. "Our demand is *not* back into the past, but wherever machinery has usurped our labour, we demand our place, as guarders, controllers, possessors. We want new fields of labour, and we want a reconstruction of our relationship with life."

The "parasitic woman" is the woman who is a wife or a concubine or a prostitute and is fed on the results of other people's toil. She is waited on by the labour of others, and she's a fine lady. She's talking about this phenomenon of women of the "intermediate" or middle classes. She's talking about the notion of 'the woman' derived from the male rationalisation of the woman's function, of the woman as competitor. She says that "men are content that women should labour as tea pickers and washer women, provided they don't enter such fields as a man might desire"

Life's Gifts

I saw a woman sleeping. In her sleep she dreamt Life stood before her, and held in each hand a gift – in the one Love, in the other Freedom. And she said to the woman, "Choose!" And the woman waited long; and she said, "Freedom!" And Life said, "Thou hast well chosen. If thou hadst said, 'Love,' I would have given thee that thou didst ask for; and I would have gone from thee, and returned to thee no more. Now, the day will come when I shall return. In that day I shall bear both gifts in one hand."
I heard the woman laugh in her sleep.



Olive Schreiner in 1897, three years after her marriage to Samuel Cronwright and four years after the publication of *Dreams*.

to enter." There's a lot which is very rhetorical and polemical about the "parasitism" of the female heralding the decay of the nation or the class. There are broad historical generalisations about the decline and fall of Empires.

Olive Schreiner's New Woman is the labouring and virile woman, not this "always fainting, always weeping, always terrified Emily or Sophia." She says the New Man is the man who finds in a woman or a wife active companionship and co-operation, rather than passive submission. The New Man is anxious to possess the New Woman only on the terms she offers.

Does she have ideas about men's socially acceptable role changing as much as women's must change? In areas like child care, for example.

She says that women's sex and reproductive function is different, and that "Nothing in that function exonerates women from obligations in labour or government." She hasn't got around yet to saying reproduction is a social function, therefore men relate to it as well. She is arguing that women's specialness shouldn't disinherit them.

She was very excited about women entering professions: she goes to a graduation ceremony where a niece graduates and she's thrilled to weeping.

Isn't that surprising in a woman whose vision is much wider than equal rights feminism?

Remember that Olive Schreiner is not only a woman living in Victorian times, but she's living in a colony where white women are living on the labour of blacks; female "parasitism" is all-pervasive. She's a feminist, but she wants a social history – a social theory. She's at the stage where she thinks that if woman can prove herself in labour, and can reclaim her province, much else will come right. She's also writing about women before the First World War, before women enter new professions, before women get into factories, and I think women have been changed by the twenties and the thirties. You can't describe "parasitism" among women in quite the same way then.

It's quite difficult to see women in their own time. That's the problem of writing a biography. Perhaps she doesn't measure up in some ways to what is being said by women's movements today, but the real measure is how tall she stands in her time.

What were her ideas on sexuality and sexual love? How did she want to live?

She saw her personal life as a battlefield. She wrote to Edward Carpenter that "Those who enter it and will not fight get riddled with bullets. The only thing for them is to keep out of it and have no personal life."

In the years when she was in England – the 1880s – she felt she could not marry. "I can't marry. I can't. I must be free." Later still, when she was 33, she wrote about how she should have married ten years ago. "My life would have been quite different, and my strength much greater. This celibacy has not been good for me."

She battled until she was 40 with the problem of sex and a woman's right to choose, and what we know today as "non-procreative sex". She wrote in one letter, "I here's no such thing between a man and a woman as friendship. There's no sex love, just sex selfishness."

She was afraid marriage and life as a conventional married woman would be the end of her freedom, but the alternative was seen as prostitution: it was one thing or the other. She talks very tenderly about women – "Being a woman I can reach other women where no man could reach me. A growing tenderness is in my heart for them" – but when it came to men, she felt or experienced that her sex was the cause of the division. She was searching for like minds and colleagues.

She said more than once that she felt like a man. "I won't be a woman in a couple of years. I began to be one when I was only ten. So I daresay I'll leave off being one in one or two, or maybe three. And then you'll think I'm a man, won't you, all of you." I think what she really means is not that she needs to be a man instead of a woman, but that she needs to be equal. She's saying: the only people in this world who are equal are men, and I need frantically to be equal/man.

"I would so much like to have a child, but I couldn't bear to be married. Neither could I bear any relationship that was not absolutely open to the world, so I could never have one." Since she felt she could not be true to herself, she dispensed with some parts of the contradiction; she just cut it away. Maybe she felt that if you're passionate, and if you show your needs, then you demean yourself in front of men.

Perhaps some women are doing an Olive Schreiner in a way. It's a form of self-protection, isn't it? Because relationships on this level can be so wounding. There's nothing that touches them.

How did she feel about her own life, how did she locate herself politically?

She needs to be rescued as a political thinker, and a political person. And she's only just coming into her own in South Africa. But perhaps she excites me more as a liberated, if struggling woman. She felt about her life that it was not being dogged by illness that she minded, it was not being able to work.

But she was tormented by illness. When she comes to England as a young woman, Havelock Ellis takes a case history, and after her death he corresponds with her husband (her official biographer) about her asthma and its beginnings in late adolescence. Much of the record of the early years was destroyed by Cronwright-Schreiner. Some relationships are fully documented – as with Ellis and Carpenter – and about others there are only fragments and hints.

She had this sense of self-persecution, that she couldn't finish or write something as well as it should be done. She was in a perpetual state of self-chastisement – not ambitious in the public sense, but dead serious about meeting the tasks she'd set herself. Throughout her life she had external signs of success, even if her views were unpopular, but these were not her measure of herself.

She grieved over an unfinished novel, *From Man to Man*, which tackled the question that was central to her – women and prostitution. It didn't reach the heights of *The Story of an African Farm*, but it was not finishing it that troubled her. She felt that "if only one lonely, struggling woman read it and found strength and comfort, she would not feel she'd lived in vain. I seem to have done so little with my life."■

Her life

She was born of missionary parents in 1855 near the mountains of Basutoland. By the age of 10 she was a free-thinker; she'd decided God was punitive. 'I can't identify with anybody', she said. 'Nobody seems to think the way I do. What is it? Is it something in me that makes it impossible?'

With no formal education, she worked as a governess, teaching six hours a day, and wrote three novels between 1874 and 1881, including *Story of an African Farm* – about adolescence and a girl's refusal to marry – and a large part of *From Man to Man*.

When she showed publishers the manuscript of *African Farm* on her arrival in London in 1881, they were unwilling to print a book in which the unmarried woman, Lyndall, gave birth. Olive refused to change a word. But she published under a male pseudonym – Ralph Iron.

Memories of her experiences and relationships with radicals and feminists in England stayed with her after she returned to South Africa.

SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION A WORD TO WOMEN.

WE, of the Women's Committee of the Social Democratic Federation, desire to bring before our fellow-women some knowledge of what Social-Democracy is, what it aims to accomplish, and to urge all women, and especially all working women, to join with us to help the movement forward to ultimate success.

The SDF, in which Olive had been involved, put out leaflets like this one.

Woman and Labour – reprinted five times and published in four languages in the two years after 1911 – was dedicated to Constance Lytton, a suffragette who had undergone forced feeding, 'not because I think it worthy of her, nor yet because of the splendid part she has played in the struggle of the women fighting today in England for certain forms of freedom for all women,' but because she 'embodied for me the highest ideal of human nature in which intellectual power and strength of will are combined with an infinite tenderness and a wide human sympathy.'■

Her books

Olive Schreiner: a Selection is available on order from Oxford University Press at £4.20. It includes: *The Story of an African Farm*; *Woman and Labour*; *From Man to Man*; *Stories, Dreams and Allegories*; *Thoughts on South Africa*. Apart from this, works by Olive Schreiner are hard to get hold of. Second hand bookshops and libraries are probably the best places to look.

Story of an African Farm appeared in Modern Penguin Classics, but it is now out of print and there are no plans for a reprint. However, if enough people put pressure on Penguins they might issue another edition. Edward Carpenter's autobiography *My Days and Dreams* (published 1918) provides insight into ideas current in radical circles about women and sexuality. Olive's husband Samuel Cronwright-Schreiner published (1924) an edited selection of her letters. You can read about Olive Schreiner and the Carpenter circle in Sheila Rowbotham's *Women, Resistance and Revolution* now in Penguin at 60p■



NO PACKET CARRIES A GOVERNMENT HEALTH WARNING

Some contraceptives can actually cause conception: this is the conclusion we have reached after examining some fourteen chemical contraceptives.

Chemical contraceptives act by killing the sperm in the vagina before it reaches the neck of the womb. They come in the forms of cream or jelly in a tube, aerosols, or pessaries which dissolve after insertion in the vagina.

We bought the contraceptives either over the counter or through two mail order firms. Most of the manufacturers gave inadequate instructions, some gave none at all, many made dubious claims – either overtly or by implication – and all failed on at least one count. The area of chemical contraception seems to be particularly prone to misinformation. It seems that as long as manufacturers can fulfil the spermicide test,

they can do what they like in terms of the way they market the product.

Before we go any further, we must emphasise that this is not a 'consumer's report' with a 'best' and 'worst' buy; nor do we intend this survey to be comprehensive. Our conclusions simply point to a fundamental problem that we as women all face, a problem that is not confined within the limited field of contraception: these products are being sold primarily for other people's gain; our interests are, at best, of secondary importance. The Marketing Report of one brand – C-Film – could hardly say it better: 'as long as the product is effective and usable, what the customer does is not the concern of the manufacturer'.

Both the mail order firms (Premier Laboratories and Lamberts (Dalston) Ltd) provided

booklets with their order forms and seemed to be trying to provide comprehensive information on what contraception was all about. One can certainly assume that the customer was expected to make a choice on the basis of the information provided. (Incidentally, both firms dealt with everything in terms of married couples – pretty objectionable considering the amount of money they must be making out of single people!) Lamberts were the most informative, dealing sensibly and objectively with each method in turn; our main criticism is that their information on the IUD was out-of-date. Premier, however, did not even mention the IUD and they only gave half the story – the worrying half – about the Pill. Of course, neither Lamberts nor Premier market the IUD ▶



Inadequate Information

In this country, spermicides have to undergo annual tests for spermicidal powder. But the functioning of a spermicide can be adversely affected by various factors:

a) Douching and bathing: 'do not douche or bath immediately after intercourse', (FPA instructing doctor writing in *General Practitioner* 22.3.74);

b) Age. *Which?* reported in 1971 that two products 'had deteriorated so much that they no longer killed sperms', and that suppositories and foaming tablets will deteriorate quickly if kept in hot or damp places;

c) The time and manner in which it is inserted (see below).

Above all, tests for spermicidal power are carried out under laboratory conditions which are far removed from the real live conditions in which spermicides are used. Thus, in the vaginal setting, it is quite easy for some sperm to completely miss contact with the spermicide, whereas in a laboratory dish this is not the case. So much for spermicidal power.

The functioning of a spermicide will therefore almost certainly be affected unless the user is aware of the above factors, and as these products are not necessarily sold in clinics, it is imperative that the manufacturers provide adequate information and instructions. Many products – like C-Film – have an exclusion clause, eg. 'highly effective when correctly applied' and 'it is vitally important that you follow the directions carefully'. Bearing this in mind, no manufacturer warned against bathing, only three warned against douching within six hours, one suggested delaying for only one hour, and Rendell's even suggest that their cream can easily be removed by douching – thereby implying that douching is a good thing, and giving no warning against it. Contrary to a recommendation in the 1971 *Which?* report, no product bore a date stamp.

No products gave any warning about the possible effects on caps or washable sheaths – and not all spermicides are fit to be used with such appliances. Rendell's Pessaries were claimed to be 'ideal with sheath or IUD' – and this product was found to damage rubber in the last *Which?* report. Were Rendell's trying to imply that their product was less than ideal for the cap? (Incidentally, neither the FPA nor the DHSS Safety Committee could enlighten us about the possible effects of these products on rubber.)

Claims and Implications

Claims for the effective use of chemical contraceptives alone are numerous, for example: 'for use alone' (Preceptin and Delfen Cream); 'no further precautions need be taken' (Rendell Pessaries); 'may be used alone when a simple (sic) method is required' (Gynomin); 'at least as reliable as the diaphragm or sheath (Delfen). Emko gives no indication whatsoever as to what it should be used with, if anything. All this contrasts strangely with what Premier and Lamberts – the distributors – say in their booklets, which have in any case probably already been thrown away by the user: despite the claims of some women, chemical contraceptives used alone have a high failure rate' (Lamberts) and 'for maximum protection the FPA advises their use only in conjunction with a diaphragm or protective (Premier). Either Premier or Lamberts, or both, market the above products; it does seem to be a case of the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing, with potentially disastrous results for the women in the middle.

Statistics on efficacy are very hard to evaluate and are easily open to abuse. However, the FPA Medical Newsletter 51 (January 1974) gives a rough guide for how successful chemicals are when used alone – and that rate varies between 10 and 40 pregnancies – in other words failures – per 100 women who get pregnant in a year. This compares badly with the range of pregnancies per hundred woman-years for the cap (5 - 25), condom (5 - 15), coitus interruptus (10 - 30), copper coil (1 - 2) and pill (0.2 - 1.5).

Confusing Instructions

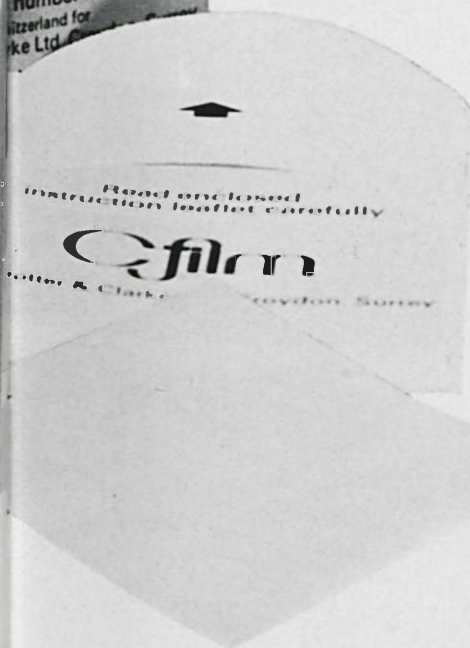
Variations in instructions for insertion abound: many suggest allowing an hour before as the deadline (Emko foam gives 3 hours); the recommendations for pessaries vary from twenty minutes to one hour... but an hour before what? Vague references are made to 'intercourse' but Rendell's Pessaries were the only product recommending re-insertion if *ejaculation* had not occurred with a specific time; all the

others seemed to assume that 'intercourse occurred in some split second – perhaps it does for the writers of instructions! The more independent writers in this field tend to take a more realistic view: 'the shorter the time (inserted) before intercourse, the better'. *Which?* believe that 'the woman should push (the tablet) as far as possible into her vagina *when she is lying down*' for maximum efficiency, and 'check that foaming starts before putting (the tablet) in – throw it away if it doesn't foam'. No firm mentioned these factors, and even Peel and Potts – a standard textbook on family planning – believe that tablets 'require no instruction apart from the warning that multiple or prolonged coitus requires plural insertion'. Rendells also say that for a few months after childbirth, two tablets are necessary. Their logic could be concerned with the fact that the hole in the hole in the cervix is slightly bigger after childbirth, – as it is after dilation of any sort (eg. abortion, D&C). Perhaps they are subtly encouraging sales by undermining women's faith in one pessary? No other firms mention this.

Aerosols: More Controversy

The Health Education Council said in its campaign last year that aerosols were the only chemicals 'recommended for use alone', and this apparently was endorsed by the FPA. The HEC's current leaflet, however, says that no chemicals are safe on their own. Others (Peel & Potts) are more emphatic: 'the pregnancy rate was still higher (for aerosols) than for traditional methods' and 'considerably less reliable than the other contraceptive methods described (Pill, IUD, cap, condom, sterilisation)'. As we have already seen, Delfen claims to be 'at least as reliable as the diaphragm or sheath' and Emko doesn't claim or suggest anything!►

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C-Film: Marketing or Mythmaking?

Confidential marketing reports on C-Film which came into our hands serve as an interesting illustration of the way information can be distorted by the subtle use of omission and understatement. The gulf between their own technical reports and the intended sales pitch indicates either an amazing degree of self-deception or an equally frightening degree of irresponsibility.

C-Film – a recent addition to the range of spermicides – is a two-inch square sheet of what looks like rice paper, which is impregnated with spermicide. The spermicide then dissolves when inserted in the vagina.

The marketing report sets out sixteen claims for C-Film and we have compared these with other material from the reports, and the final sales pitch. Most of the claims deal with the sperm-killing power of the contraceptive, and as all products have to pass the authorities' tests (however inadequate we feel they might be), this is in no doubt. But what of the other claims?

1. 'C-Film's efficacy, combined with simplicity, means freedom from anxiety.'

Efficacy: The marketing report recommends: 'the strongest possible case to support the claims being made without use-effectiveness studies'. It goes on to say 'absence of use-effectiveness failure rate data makes C-Film less vulnerable (than the IUD and Pill) since rates cannot be quoted against the product in the early critical launch days'. The technical report finds that 'only dead sperms were found in the vagina or cervical canal after use, as long as it was inserted sufficiently high in the vagina'. An FPA instructing doctor has said: 'some patients

have short fingers and a long vagina and cannot reach the cervix', and, as we shall see, insertion is one of the biggest problems with C-Film.

Simplicity: Under 'marketing problems', the report says: 'initially the product will be difficult to use'. The technical report confirms this: thirty women tested C-Film for 'acceptability' and 'the greatest problem expressed without prompting from the questioner by almost every patient was the actual insertion of C-Film'. However the reports still concludes that 'acceptance of the product among actual potential users appears to be high'. This 'problem is covered legally in the instructions for use by the words 'of course you will need a little practice when you begin to use C-Film'. Sales material claims that the film is 'easy and uncomplicated'.

Freedom from Anxiety: Only 14 out of the 30 women testing C-Film said they would be happy about using it. Not surprising, as the marketing report mentions 'an added difficulty is that women cannot feel whether C-Film has been correctly positioned whether by finger or penile insertion'.

2. 'C-Film is a Uni-sex product.'

The marketing report says: 'The efficacy of male penile insertion is currently being investigated. However, at its simplest it is not so easy as insertion employing a finger... we therefore recommend that digital insertion by the woman primarily and by the man second should be encouraged as the optimal method at least by implication if not directly'. Sales material describes C-Film as 'the first contraceptive that either men or women can use with equal ease'. Instructions for men do not suggest digital insertion, although it is mentioned in passing in the general description of the product.

3. 'C-Film can be inserted up to an hour before lovemaking.'

The sales material and instructions are even less clear than in other chemical products. In some places insertion up to two hours before intercourse is recommended; the instructions say one hour and sales material by mail order proclaim 'it can be used long before intercourse'.

4. 'With C-Film the woman has more authority in the partnership.'

A creditable aim, but all forms of contraception excluding sheaths and vasectomy are used by the woman.

Marketing:

1. 'C-Film will be priced at a high level. This should reinforce the image and credibility of the product.' 10 FPA sheaths cost 50p; an FPA pack of 10 sheaths and 10 pessaries – a pretty good insurance against pregnancy – costs 66p; 10 C-Film cost 74½p, and you'll probably waste half of the first pack trying to insert them properly.

2. The main sales pitch is at young married couples, but, 'it is certainly worth considering ways of getting C-Film sold directly to young people (if legally permissible) through universities etc. and using mail order.' The pitch aimed at doctors is different however, 'He may recommend C-Film to women who want more to space their families than prevent conception. For these women a pregnancy would not be a tragedy or a problem.' What would it be to a 19-year-old student or unsupported mother or you?

Conclusion

It seems clear that the marketing of these products should be strictly controlled. The Family Planning Association and the Health Education Council have responded to a solicitation for comments on this spermicides' report. The FPA asked us to point out that it has stopped prescribing C-Film because of the very high pregnancy rate, 'in case any of your readers were persuaded to use this method as a result of your article'. It has not, however, seen fit to comment on the fundamental issues raised (no product bears date stamps, Delfen or Rendell's bear inadequate or misleading information and these are marketed by the FPA). The HEC, likewise, concerned itself with justifying its original position on aerosols and failed to see that it had any cause for further comment. We can only presume that these two organisations are unconcerned with the state of affairs. No reply has been received so far from the Brooks Advisory Clinics or the International Planned Parenthood Federation, and the Department of Health and the Office of a Fair Trading are concerned, but ruminating.

It seems clear that the marketing of these products should be strictly controlled. The more obvious issues are date-stamping and the provision of adequate information. The more difficult ones are the 'undermining' techniques as seen in the example of C-Film, where double precautions are suggested if avoidance of pregnancy is 'imperative', yet the reassuring tone in the rest of the instructions heavily counterbalances this.

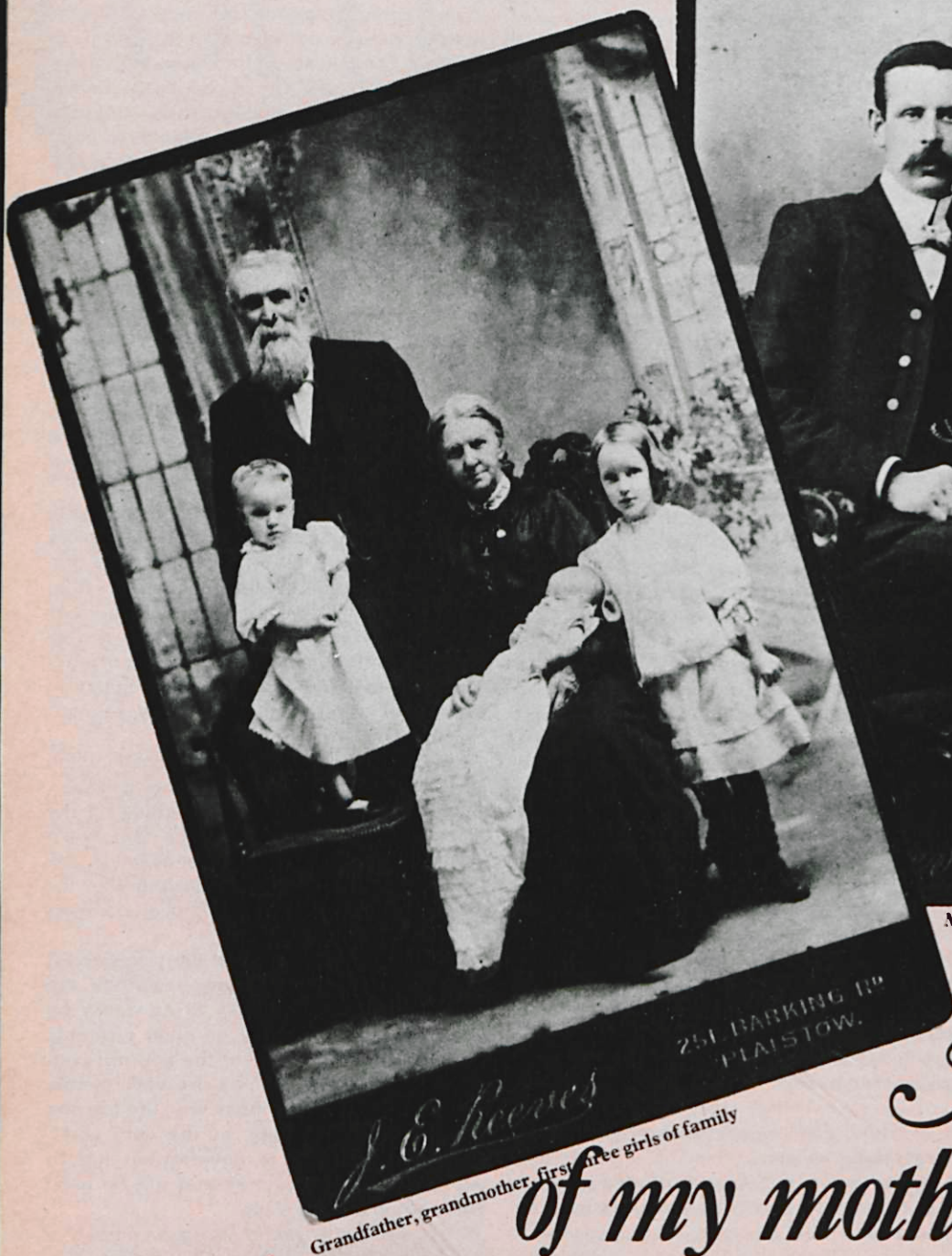
None of the makers seems to be breaking the law. The fact is, there isn't much law to break – and it's only recently the Committee on the Safety of Medicines has decided to concern itself with efficacy of drugs as well as safety. The Committee is not, however, dealing with the gap between efficacy and the implied claims of manufacturers.

We believe that chemical contraceptives, marketed in the way we have described, are likely to cause a woman to conceive by encouraging her to rely on such products alone. Mail order and over-the-counter contraceptives are bought by the very people who are most at risk: those who are too shy to seek advice. Surely, at the very least, there is a need for a government health warning: 'This product should not be used without a sheath or a cap.'

Jill Rakusen and Angela Phillips are members of Women's Report, where this article first appeared. Women's Report is a bi-monthly round-up of news in 20 pages and they rely on subscriptions to keep it going – £1 for 6 issues a year, or 17p for a sample copy. The address is 75 Albert Palace Mansions, Lurline Gardens, London SW11.

Jill is also a member of the Aware Health Clinic which aims to research into women's experiences with doctors and doctors' attitudes to women, and to analyse and publicise their findings. Anyone interested can write to them at 18a Ferndale Road, London N15■

Research by Jill Rakusen and written by Jill Rakusen and Angela Phillips.



Mothers mother and father

Memories of my mother-in-law

from the time she was born up till 1923
when she left school at 14 and started work
as a box-maker.

My mother-in-law was born in August 1909 at Plaistow when Edward VII was king. She was the second child in a family of four children, three sisters and the youngest child a brother.

She was brought up in a three-bedroomed house together with her paternal grandparents. She considers she had an extremely happy and settled childhood, due partly to the fact that her father had regular employment as a clerk in Henley's Cable factory in Woolwich. To get to work he travelled a 2p tram journey (4p return) but would always walk the first part of the way as to tram

this as well would have cost him another 1p (2p return). His hours were 9-5.30 pm Mon-Fri and 9-12 noon Sat. His wages were £2 per week and his father received 5s. pension from Tate & Lyle, 5s OAP and his mother also received a 5s. OAP. Her father's job was a non-union one and she has no recollections of him ever being on strike.

Another strong influence in the stability of her upbringing was the unquestioning respect of parents and the church. Her father never swore at the children or ever hit them, he never rowed or shouted with her mother, at least not in front of the children. The grandparents, on the other hand, did argue and this was very upsetting, also the drunken fights of a few neighbours



Mother-in-law

The furniture of her house was much as of the time. The parlour had a piano, a mahogany table, lino and mats and a low, open fire place with fire irons. The kitchen had a scrub top table, wooden chairs, (her father's chair was the holy of holies), rag rugs and a large kitchen range for cooking on. Lighting in the kitchen was by an oil lamp which was attached to the ceiling and went up and down. Her mother would turn the oil lamp off in the winter to save the oil and they would all sit in the firelight, singing songs and hymns until her father came home when the lamp would be re-lit. The parlour was lit by a portable oil lamp which her parents sometimes used in their bedroom, but normally it was candles for the bedroom.

At mealtimes, as far as possible, all the family sat down to a meal together, but as children they were not allowed to talk whilst eating and they were certainly not allowed to 'get down' until everyone had finished. A typical breakfast would be porridge and toast, with sandwiches taken to school for lunch. She thought nothing of having jam or mashed potato sandwiches. If they did come home for lunch for some reason they would have jacket potatoes. Tea would be bread and jam and often bread pudding. Her mother, more often than not, would have a pot of broth on the range in the winter made from a marrow bone and split peas. During the 1914-1918 war, margarine and butter were unavailable at one point and she remembers having bread and lard with salt and pepper. Whilst she does remember having meat, eggs, bacon and cheese, they were obviously less in evidence than the starchy, filling foods. The family kept chickens for meat and eggs in 1914-1918.

There was the usual corner shop and it was the children's job to run errands. A cup would be taken for a pennyworth of mustard pickle, beetroot jam, or the like. Her mother always bought tea in 1/4lb bags. Normally they all ate margarine but with 2 oz butter for father. If any of the children were ill, he would nurse them while he ate and feed them titbits off his plate. During the 1914-1918 war you had to register where you would buy your groceries and the children would take it in turn to queue early, then their mother would come and take their place and whichever child it was would run off to school. During Christmas week the stalls in the markets would be left up decorated and you could buy oranges, 40 for 1s. Presumably oranges couldn't have been so available during the war.

Washing and cleaning in the home really were heavy chores. To do the washing you first had to save everything that would burn to stoke up the stove and copper, or the stove and cast-iron copper. My mother-in-law remembers that her mother was friendly with the owners of the corner shop who would give her wood in the shape of boxes. Once you had your fuel, you had to fill your copper by hand and when the water was hot you ladled it out into a tin bath when you would use a rubbing board and blocks of soap. Once all the washing had been rubbed it went back into the refilled copper together with bleaching soda and ordinary soda and would be left to boil for 20 minutes. It was a steamy job, pushing it down every so often with copper stick. As the children went out to work and there was a little more money, her mother would use Hudson's Soap Powder instead of the two sorts of soda. When the wash had finished boiling it would be lifted out into a bath of clean water to be rinsed, all 'whites' would be 'blue' with a Reckitts blue bag, or starched, and finally it

would all be wrung out through a hand-operated mangle. After the wash had been dried it would be ironed on the kitchen table on an old piece of blanket with a sheet or piece of cotton over that. The irons would be hot irons heated by the fire and the only sure way to see if they were hot enough would be to spit on them. In 1923, her mother had to have an operation for breast cancer and a neighbour, whose husband was a dock worker, and more often than not, was not chosen to work, came in and did all the washing, not the ironing, for 2.6d. The neighbour came at 8 am and left at 1 pm and would only stop for a glass of beer and bread and cheese half way through the morning. Apparently this neighbour also took in washing and thought nothing of pawning the clean laundry on Tuesday until payday. My mother-in-law only ever went into a pawn shop once and she had such a telling off from her mother that she was too frightened ever to go again, even though she had only gone with a friend. The hearth had to be hearthstoned and black leaded, the fenders rubbed with brasso. The step and sills would be rubbed with a donkey stone. Lace curtains starched and pulled.



Children started school much earlier than now it seems. My mother-in-law started school at four and a half, but her elder sister started at three. There were 45-50 pupils in a class and lessons were done on a slate with a slate pencil. The poor children would go to school early at 8 am and have a breakfast of porridge and bread and margarine, but for them to receive this their parents would have to have undergone a means test and to have sold any furniture or goods that weren't really essential to living. The receiving officer would then issue five tickets for breakfasts for a week. She has no memories of school lunches. She was taught the three R's and also how to knit. When you became an older pupil you were taken swimming. If, as a pupil you became 'high' in the hot weather, the teacher would arrange to take you to the public baths where you had a free bath and you became socially more acceptable. It was only the neglected children who had to suffer this fate. To have a bath at home, the copper ritual would have to start all over again, the tin bath would be placed on two kitchen chairs in front of the fire, the eldest child had the cleanest water with the

water being topped up down to the youngest.

For clothes the girls always wore a white pinafore over a thick winter dress or in the summer a calico dress. Under this would be either a flannelette or calico petticoat, flannel stays, liberty bodice, a vest and calico drawers. In winter this would be topped off with a coat and knitted hat. Her mother made all of their clothes but after the eldest it was all hand-me-downs. As they all wore button boots, the girls always fought as to whom would have the button hook first. Straight hair was curled in 'rag crackers' for special occasions and as most Sunday School parties were on a Friday evening you had to present a note at school asking permission to keep your 'rags' in during the day.

Pleasure activities would cost 1/4d. each on the tram to Barking Park on Bank Holidays. When her father would take them on the boating lake, the charge was 1d. for children, 2d. for adults. On Ascension Day she would have the day off school and they would go with the Sunday School to Wanstead Flats and run and play. For the really poor children the Ragged Union Priest would take a party of them on the tram and they would ride backwards and forwards on the Woolwich Free Ferry. Mum was always upset that she didn't qualify to go. On birthdays the child whose day it was would receive a card and 1d. and there would be a 1.4d. for the other three children. Another way of the children earning money would be to clean grandma's room and scrub her table for 1/4d. The only toy she can remember having was a wax doll she won for best attendance at Sunday School.

Pastimes included a lot of church activities or Knock Down Ginger on the way home from school. On the way to school they would have a winter warmer which was a lump of dry-rag in a tin with holes punched in it and a handle of wire. You lit the rag and spun the whole container around to make the rag glow and then held it to warm your hands. The lid of a Cherry Blossom tin and a length of string would make an excellent top and a large button and a length of string a 'buzzer'. Pigs bladders for a 1/4d. made an excellent football but they weren't allowed to have them in the house as they had a strong smell. Her mother and father used to go the Music Halls when they were courting.

If you needed a doctor but had no money you went to the relieving office doctor and then received any medicine you needed off him. Her brother once had an abscess in his groin and the doctor charged 1s. for calling, and then lanced the abscess while her brother was on the kitchen table.

A milkman called and he took a measure from his can and ladled it into your own jug. The baker also came, and weighed each loaf on a pair of scales before he sold it to you as, if it was under weight, you had a make-weight piece.

Her few recollections of the 1914-1918 war include remembering brown paper stuck to the windows as black out and sitting under the kitchen table for a shelter.

Whilst I think she had remembered fairly accurately and not made things seem too rosy, I do wonder what her father's working hours were as they seem much too short compared to other workers of the time.

Another reason for their completeness as a family may have been that her mother was half German and may have been subject to ill-feeling from neighbours, and if they kept themselves to themselves perhaps they felt more secure■

Merlin Clarke

ON THE BENCH

Roz Carne describes her temporary job in Bairds, a factory in Yorkshire.

Four women in blue nylon overalls sit on the dry grass of a patch of waste-land and stretch out their legs in the sunshine. It is 12.50 and one of them looks nervously at her watch...

"Ten to one... d'you think we should go back?" The other three exchange glances.

"I suppose so," says another moving to stand, and she smiles, a bit grimly, "Back to prison girls".

It was my first day at Bairds, one of the largest factories in Bradford, and I giggled with the others at the remark. It wasn't long before I came to see the reality behind the humour.

Of the 5,000 workers at Bairds, approximately 4,500 are women. I was surprised at the figure at first, for the men, more mobile in their work and likely to be in supervisory positions, are very much more obtrusive. The factory, which is entirely given over to the production of colour televisions, is owned by the Thorn Electrical Industries Group, a huge multi-national incorporating Radio Rentals, DER, Multi-Broadcast, Vista, Ferguson, Ultra, HMV, Atlas, Mazda, Bendix, Kenwood, Moffat Parkinson, Kenwood, Cowan and Tricity (*Observer Business News*). The list seems endless. The group makes a net profit of more than £1 million a week. I went to work there partly because, even as a graduate and journalist, it was the best paid job I could find in the town and partly because I'd never worked in a factory and I was curious. I didn't last long at Bairds... but then unattached, middle class and educated, there were other options open to me. Most of those women at Bairds have no such options.

My job was to assemble 'jelly pots', little lumps of plastic that needed to be screwed on a base and fitted up with bits of wire, called resistors. I never did find out how the jelly pot fitted into the colour telly. The screws went in with an 'air gun', a fairly heavy piece of electrical equipment that hung on a spring and had to be pulled sharply forward each time. I thought my right arm was going to fall off after the first day. Once the jelly pot was screwed onto its base, the resistors were twisted on and soldered. This was fiddly, and you were likely to solder your finger if you weren't careful, but it wasn't half as tiring as using the gun. What made the whole operation so exhausting was the speed with which it had to be done and the constant pressure not to get behind in your work. I wish I could remember the exact number I had to do each day. I think it was about 800. If the girl next to me didn't have enough completed jelly pots, she'd be unable to make up her panels as they passed down the track and if her panels weren't



Photo: Martin Cook



made up the whole track was screwed... production fell and we'd all lose our bonus. There was pressure on everyone of us to do the job as fast as possible.

The awful thing is you hate yourself, but you do it.

My job was generally acknowledged as one of the hardest "stations" on the track. It was almost impossible, unless you'd been working on it six months or more and become totally robot-like in the process, not to get behind. It was perfectly acceptable, even expected, that if your neighbour had a spare moment she'd help you out. It meant we all worked non-stop, and some of us in tea break. I was determined not to be ground down and refused to touch my tools during those ten minutes of quasi-freedom. But as the weeks went on I found my attitude softening. What the hell. I knew if I spent a couple of minutes on the job after dinner and made up a few extra jelly pots it would save me going crazy trying to keep up during the afternoon. That's why you're given too much to do - if the work is timed according to the easiest job on the track it's reckoned everyone else will struggle to keep up somehow. The awful thing is you hate yourself, but you do it. In just the same way I'd hide my newspaper when the supervisor went past. Oh, I despised myself but I'd say... if I get the sack I'll make sure it's over something important. In the end whether you get the sack or not usually depends on whether or not the management need to cut down on the work force. If they do they'll sack people for clocking in two minutes late rather than deal out redundancy payments.

Comradeship on the track was really startling. On my first station, before they transferred me to the jelly pots, there was time for a smoke and a chat... sex was the favourite topic.

Medium and even hard core porn passed up and down the line... given a moment women threw their arms around each other or pinched a nearby bum. These women were amazing. They worked their guts out from 7.30 to 4.30 every day, often all evening and weekend too if they had families, but they managed to remain human. They'd complain about the work of course, it was boring, often exhausting and totally alienating, but knowing they'd probably never get out, they'd found ways to deal with it. They accepted me, thinking I was probably a student, though at first they were rather apprehensive. "I bet you think

we're terribly wicked" giggled a rather attractive young blonde woman as she leafed her way through *Men Only*. Wicked? I found it all quite amazing, not to mention, the surreptitious Guinness she'd be swigging under the track when the supervisor turned her back.

But my second job, on the jelly pot station, was very different. Supervision was much closer and it was difficult to smuggle literature along the line. Even eating an apple on the track in breaktime was forbidden - and as it took five minutes to get to the canteen and morning break was only ten minutes long, there wasn't much opportunity to get a snack anywhere else. People did go to the canteen of course but when you're physically exhausted you don't really feel like careering across the factory to snatch a cup of tea and a bun.

Two weeks on that track and I was just about half dead. The work would have been just about bearable if it hadn't been so hard to recover from it. But I was incapable of anything after nine hours at Bairds and spent most of the weekends sleeping. I was one of the lucky ones though. I lived with some very supportive people who were quite ready to let me skip making the tea or doing much in the house. Not many women have it so good. Here's someone else's story:

"I have to get up at 5 o'clock in the morning to get breakfast for my husband and the kids. Then I get the kids ready and take them to the baby minder's in time to get to work for 7.30. I don't have time for any breakfast myself. At dinner time I do a bit of shopping, then go home, do a bit of cleaning and get the potatoes ready for tea. When I get in from work, by the time I've got tea and cleaned up, it's 8 o'clock before I can sit down. All I'm fit for is the telly. Big shopping and washing have to be done at the weekend. Sunday is the only day I get any rest."

When one woman moaned to me about the twelve shirts she'd have to iron that evening, I tentatively suggested her husband might help. "Oh, he's not to touch them love, after all he works hard all day. "There seems to be a notion, widespread even among women who actually go to work, that their work isn't real work. When I replied in amazement that her husband wasn't the only one who did a hard day's work she thought about it for a moment and then said, "But he does the garden at the weekend". But it's hard to discuss the question of domestic labour with most of the women at Bairds.

Yet there's dissatisfaction in the factory and anger. It simply seems to have no outlet yet. Some women are in the union, the AUEW, but less than

half who work there - it is male dominated and hardly relevant to most of the women who have little energy to look beyond the next coffee break. For that's what the work does to you. You hate it, but somehow it grinds down your militancy by the sheer effort required to survive at all.

Bairds pay £26 a week before tax which looked at in relation to other scales, is not a bad wage for a female factory worker in the North of England in 1974. Because they give out more than most factories or the mills, they seem to think they can treat you like scum... but I guess all workers are treated like scum. I'd never experienced it personally before.

I had the cheek to question the decisions of authority.

A visit to the personnel department brought this home most clearly. As a journalist, I'd had some contact with personnel officers, but now I approached them in a very different role. I hoped to put up a poster advertising a benefit party for a women's aid centre in the town and I decided to try the official channels. This meant an official application to personnel to have the poster approved. Of course I wasn't allowed to put it up and despite the apparently apolitical nature of the request I wasn't really surprised. What did shock me was the treatment I received as I entered the staff offices in my blue nylon overall. Not only were they off-hand and rude, but, immediately recognizable as one of the workers, I was regarded as an inferior being. When I found the personnel office I wasn't allowed in with my request. One of the secretaries begrudgingly went in with it. After a minute she emerged...

"Nope, it's not been approved."

"Why not?"

"What d'you mean why not?"

"Why not?"

"Does that matter?" She was amazed I had the cheek to question the decisions of authority. It was just like school.

"Yes, will you find out for me please?"

"Oh, alright." She went in again and came out to tell me that Mrs. H. was busy and that if I really wanted to know why I couldn't put up the poster I'd have to make another appointment to see her through my supervisor. Unfortunately I'd left Bairds before I had the chance to find out. When I told Annie, who sat next to me about the snotty nosed crowd in personnel she simply shrugged her shoulders, commenting, "Oh, they're a load of snobs down there." It was hardly worth a second thought.

I remember Annie telling me about a show bungalow she'd been to see near the village where she lived.

"Do you know what it costs," she said, "£60,000. I bet no one will buy it. Who's got £60,000? Perhaps one of the Beatles will come and live here." I suggested the bloke who owned the factory might like it for a country cottage.

"No, no one could afford it." Such stupendous sums of money were totally beyond her comprehension. Sir Jules Thorn has in fact a share stake in the company worth around £12 million and owns a £2 million yacht among other essentials.

Two minutes before the 4.30 bell we'd be lined up as if at the start of a race. We were supposed to collect our coats and wait at our places on the track... but by this time the supervisors' power would be waning. There was little they could do to control the mass of women edging down to the doors. At 4.30 the bell went and as if fire had broken out, we'd stampede to the factory gates with a sudden surge of energy ■



Michael Ann Mullen

1870. Education for all – A *mixed* lesson in a board school.

Sexism in schools goes way beyond textbooks and the usual complaints that girls do cookery and boys take carpentry. Anne Reyersbach calls the more subtle sexism 'the hidden curriculum' . . . girls are not allowed to wear trousers . . . boys are told to let girls through doors first . . . 'Ladies don't play football' . . . girls water the plants while boys take out the rubbish. Parents attempts to break down sex roles at home are made a mockery of at school where different standards and different expectations are imposed on both girls and women teachers. Sometimes children suffer from this contradiction between home and school – hating to be different in any way – but more often sexist conditioning sinks in unnoticed and uncombated. Anne Reyersbach, a teacher, is writing an article for Spare Rib on the hidden curriculum and would like to hear about other people's experiences. And Helen Petit, an exteacher, is going to describe the alienation of a feminist teaching in a primary school, trying to change sex-role stereotyping from within. She would like to hear from people who are managing to make headway in a similar position.

Send ideas, comments, stories to Anne Reyersbach and Helen Petit c/o Spare Rib.

NEWS



Michael Ann Mullen

Women workers and the TUC

The 1974 TUC Conference voted to retain the TUC Women Workers' Conference. Some greeted the vote as a victory for women - others, like myself, saw it as a defeat. The fact that women genuinely concerned with the liberation of women should have two opposing reactions to the vote reflects the confusion amongst women as to how they think women should fight within the Trade Union movement to achieve equality in its widest sense.

Some history

Before looking at the debate which took place at this conference on the motion to abolish the Women's TUC Conference, it is worth looking at its history. In the early 1920s the structure of the TUC as we know it came into being. The women successfully amended the proposed structure to secure two protected women's seats on the newly formed General Council; and a Women Workers' Committee was set up, to carry on the work of the Women's Trade Union League which after almost 50 years of separate existence had decided to merge with (or perhaps be submerged in) the TUC.

However, in 1923 several women felt that women needed another

forum, besides the limited Committee, in which the problems of women Trade Unionists could be discussed. A motion to establish a separate women's conference was moved at the 1923 Conference and passed. The debate round that motion is interesting in that the reasons expressed for and against were very similar to those expressed in 1974. As in 1974 there were those who argued that the problems of women workers were the problems of all workers, and that separate organisations would only exacerbate the rift between the sexes and hinder rather than help women towards equality. Those who were for it - and won the day, as in 1974 - argued that women did not have confidence, that they needed somewhere to build up that confidence, somewhere to share their problems with other women workers and learn about Trade Unionism.

So the Women's TUC, after a few birth pangs, came into being. However, it was given no power. It was there, and still is, merely to advise an Advisory Committee of General Council.

Whilst at the TUC level in the 1920s separate women's organisations were being set up, on the individual union level they were disappearing. In various amalgamations

of the period separate women's unions amalgamated with men's. The most significant was the amalgamation of the National Federation of Women Workers (NFWW) with the National Union of General Workers (now the G&MWU). The NFWW had a brief, militant life. It was formed in 1906 and by 1918 it had 80,000 members and 50 women organisers. In 1920 it became a 'district' of the National Union of General Workers and by 1970 that section had four women organisers and women were 29% of a G&MWU membership of 853,353. In these amalgamations women members not only lost out on the control and care of their own membership, but women members of the whole Trade Union movement lost out. For as individual Unions they could and did send up motions to the TUC Conference. As sections of other Unions it was a hard fight to get motions concerning women accepted by the Union as worthy of being chosen for the TUC Conference.

The NFWW motions to the TUC Conference of 1916 provide a good example. They sent three motions: one concerned wages for women war workers not covered by specific legislation; another demanded a state-paid maternity grant for women workers for two months be-

fore birth, and at least three months after the birth of a child; the third called for a redistribution of wealth, through regradation of income tax, regulation of food prices, nationalisation of land, mines, railways and canals, and the re-organisation of industry to secure all workers work at Trade Union rates or state maintenance to be paid until work was secured. Here the women were both forcing Conference to debate "women's" issues and also showing that women were concerned with wider social and economic issues.

Whether the women were right to amalgamate at that moment in time is another issue, but what a study of those years 1910 to 1923 shows is that women played an active part in Conference and were represented - in the number of women delegates to Conference - in a very similar proportion to the number of women organised as they are now. The existence of the Women's TUC does not show any evidence of having helped to increase the number of women delegates participating at the TUC Conference. Nor has it increased the number of motions concerning the problems of women workers to be brought to and discussed at Conference. Likewise the existence of the two women's seats on the General Council can be

said to mark no progress. Women occupied two seats in 1921 and they have only ever occupied two seats since.

This year's debate

The motion at this year's Conference to abolish the Women's TUC was therefore aimed at abolishing the institutionalised 'slot' women have occupied in the TUC structure for the last 50 years.

The motion was proposed by a male delegate from the Society for Civil Servants. Gilman said that

strongly worded attack. "The Women's TUC is only there to 'consider the problems of women and young workers'. It is a discussion place and nothing more. It can only advise an Advisory Committee to which it can only elect 5 of the 13 members." She also went on to talk of the patronising attitude which the people who supported the existence of the Women's TUC held towards women. She likened it to the Bantustans of South Africa, a case of "sexual apartheid" with the similar condescending attitude that women,

and thought that the Women's Conference shouldn't be abandoned until women delegates outnumbered men at Congress. She claimed there were two types of discrimination, "discrimination by capital and discrimination by men". The former, she thought, was the problem of the TUC as a whole; the latter a problem for women and was a problem for which women needed a separate conference to air their feelings. She also believed that the Women's Conference did provide a chance for women to build up their confidence.

determined him to put the motion to the vote to see whether Conference would do more than "pay lip service to women's equality". The vote was taken - the motion defeated. No figures of the vote are available.

It all happened in a rush at the end of an afternoon's session and some of us thought the vote was close enough for a card vote (precise counting rather than a show of hands) but the Chairman turned a blind eye. For an issue over which Conference was so closely divided there was

their basic argument in proposing the motion was that "the problems facing women at work are *workers'* problems and should be brought into the main body of the Trade Union movement". He did not want to "denigrate the quality of the Women's TUC"; but "that quality of debate should be brought to this Congress". The existence of the Women's TUC was, he thought, "an anachronism" which reflected a patronising attitude towards women summed up in "let them go and discuss these arguments amongst themselves". He further argued that the existence of the Women's TUC discouraged women from actively participating in Conference, and thus it meant the women and the problems of women workers remained at the periphery of the Trade Union movement. However, he recognised that thought would have to be given as to how the TUC Conference timetable could be changed in order to ensure that women's problems were discussed.

Katie Doyle from the NUJ seconded the motion with a more

like blacks, need a special nursery-type training before they can go to big school. Whilst defending the need for an Advisory Committee to advise and pressurise General Council about women's problems, Katie Doyle, like Gilman, believed that "the problems of women workers are the problems of the movement as a whole, and should be debated by the main policy-making body - Congress."

An amendment which asked for General Council not to abolish the Women's TUC but to "consider and recommend ways to improve participation of women trade unionists in Congress" was moved by Margaret Morrison of the Civil Service Union. She appealed, "If we disband this Conference what do we put in its place?" and further appealed that the Women's TUC should not be disbanded until effective participation of women at every level of the TUC was ensured, and that time at Congress was also ensured for women's issues.

Shirley Myers (AUEW TASS) went further in opposing the motion

This point was elaborated by Marie Patterson, speaking from the platform in defence of the Women's TUC (she was Chairman of it in 1973/74 and is Chairman of the Women's Advisory Committee). She also reminded Conference that the Women's Conference itself had debated the issue and had voted against disbanding itself. "We", she said, "look forward to a time when separate platforms are not necessary but the time has not yet arrived". However, she hoped that more men would attend the Women's TUC and discuss the problems of women workers. In appealing to the mover to remit the motion to General Council she pleaded that the Women's TUC should not be disbanded before anything could be put in its place.

The vote

Gilman hesitated about remitting his motion, but loud cries of "no"

virtually no debate. Besides the mover, seconder and mover of the amendment - who have a right to speak - only one speaker from the floor was chosen, and one speaker from the platform - hardly a debate.

Those who voted against the motion could, I think, be crudely divided into three categories. There were those who were genuinely concerned about the vacuum it might leave if the Women's TUC was abolished; there were those - the women at the top - who have a vested status interest in seeing it preserved; and there were those delegations who obviously think that the place of women's issues is at the Women's TUC.

My reasons for voting for the abolition of the Women's TUC were many that were stated in the brief debate and some that were left out. My primary reason for believing that it should be abolished is *that it has no power. It is a talking shop at*

double remove from General Council. You cannot be equal in a power structure if you have no power - you - as woman trade unionist - are given a forum to air your views but no means to see they are made policy. The fact that so little has been achieved by or for women workers by the Trade Union movement in the last fifty years only confirms the belief that the Women's TUC has acted as a cypher for women's problems: actually inhibiting women being at, and their problems being discussed at, the

Conference in any greater numbers proportionate to the number of women organised than it did fifty years ago. Likewise there seems little evidence that the Women's TUC helps the rank and file woman member to gain confidence and knowledge of how to use her union.

However, what there is a need for is for Unions to spend particular time explaining the working of Unions, procedure, structure etc to women. This is probably best done by women's committees in Unions at the

about 50% on average of men's wages). They have negotiated unequal "Equal Pay" agreements, discriminatory pension schemes and grades which do not recognise women's skills. The problems of maternity leave, child care and creche facilities have been ignored (it's significant that there was no creche/nursery at the Conference, which means any woman with young children, unless her spouse looks after her children, cannot attend Conference; and one-parent families have no hope). Likewise unions have done little to actively help women participate in meetings by holding meetings at convenient times and in convenient places for women. One could go on listing at length the way Trade Unions either discriminate or do nothing positively to help women.

It is vital to ensure that women's problems are considered by the Trade Union movement as a whole. This has to take place at the individual Union level and at TUC level. The Women's Advisory Council of the TUC fulfils a role and in the last few years it has been increasingly positive and active. That is not enough. Again it is only "Advisory" and General Council need not accept or act upon its advice. Other means must be found which ensure that women's problems are brought to and discussed by the main policy-making body of the Trade Union Movement - the TUC Annual Conference.

Provision must be made for motions concerning women to be brought to and given time at Conference. If the Women's TUC did not exist, at least Executives could not filter off motions from women to the Women's TUC and so a few more might get on the TUC Agenda. Another solution would be to invest the Women's TUC with the power of policy-making - *binding on the rest of the Trade Union movement*. If it had that the big power men would be there, for sure, trying to take it over. But at least women's problems would be discussed seriously. None of this would substitute for the active involvement by women in their own unions at every level. This would not only ensure women were represented at all levels and that women's issues were discussed, but it would also mean that women could make their unions work for them. They would make sure decent agreements were negotiated for them, that their skills were recognised, that they got maternity leave, etc. It's also a two-way process - if women begin to see that they get something from the Union, they're much more likely to give to the Union.

Women must make their Union work for them, and make the TUC work for them. I see no role for the Women's TUC - as it is now structured - in that fight.

Sarah Boston

Believe and you will conquer

Suffragette banner, Hford Women's Social and Political Union, on display at an Exhibition of Labour History in Brighton.

The Exhibition of Labour History which was presented by Brighton Hove and District Trades Council to coincide with the TUC, and prepared by Andy Durr, a lecturer at Brighton Polytechnic, and Terry McCarthy, a student at Sussex University, was important because for the first time there was a section specifically on women's involvement in the labour movement. Interestingly though there had been disagreement among the organisers of the exhibition as to the need for a women's section, along similar lines to those outlined by Sarah Boston in her account of the debate on women at the TUC itself.

There were photos of early women organisers: Mary Macarthur, an upper class woman who was prominent in the National Federation of Women Workers; and Ellen Wilkinson, known as Red Helen (because of her red hair). There were front covers of periodicals like *The Woman Worker*, "a monthly journal for working women" edited by Dr Marion Phillips, which were striking in their design and in their imagery. One, for example, showed a group of women on a stormy sea holding out their hands to women in danger of drowning. There were Fabian pamphlets directed at working women which cost one penny and two pence; and leaflets from the Social Democratic Federation Women's Committee (whose meetings took place in Bow, East London), like the one we used as an illustration to the piece about Olive Schreiner (page 8 of this issue).

The aim of the exhibition wasn't to be a museum-like spectacle, but to inspire others to set up their own. You can get photos, documents, etc from the Labour Party and the TUC, for example.

AS

MISPRINT

According to the article entitled *Liverpool Strike in Spare Rib* 28 (p. 22), the 250 women workers at Wingrove and Rogers "have been put on official strike since July 24th". This implies that the women were told what to do by the AUEW, and gives the impression that *Spare Rib* is both cynical on questions of workers' democracy, and ignorant of the fact that a decision to strike is made by a vote at a union meeting.

We overlooked the mistake in the typesetting, for which the original copy read "who have been out on official strike since July 24th", and would like to apologise to the women strikers and the AUEW for any confusion and resentment our carelessness may have caused.

TUC Conference. Those that argue that women Trade Unionists, having become infinitely more active in the last few years, can use the Women's TUC as an effective pressure point, forget that however loud they protest, or however good the resolutions they pass, they are not binding on the Trade Union Movement. Pressure could be much more effectively wielded at the power point of the shop floor.

The argument that women need the Women's TUC as a place to learn and gain confidence, when used as a justification for the existence of the Women's TUC as it is now, is patronising. At the TUC Conference this year a good number of women not only spoke but spoke extremely well, which earned them praise both privately and publicly. Of course many people, and women in particular, are terrified of public speaking; and whilst fear of public speaking and ignorance of Trade Union matters undoubtedly intimidate women from participating in Trade Union affairs, these do not justify the continued existence of the TUC. As I have said, its history shows that it has not encouraged women to participate at the TUC

local or shop floor level. Positive encouragement and advice on public speaking at that level would be much more help.

As to those women - the ones sitting on the platform - who plead "We are not ready yet" to be equal: I wonder how their sisters back in 1916 would have reacted to such a plea. They would have thought it retrograde then and inconceivable that by the 1970s so little should have changed.

Reality of the problem

This is not to say that women workers and women Trade Unionists do not have very real problems. Many women workers are still unorganised, and those that are organised are ill served by their Unions. Most Unions have pitifully few, if any, women organisers, practically no women on their executives. At the TUC Conference this year there were only 60 women delegates to 1000 men, even though women form about 25% of the total TUC membership. Unions have done little to improve the general low pay of women workers or the average differential between men's and women's wages (women still earn

Problems of Women's Conferences

Dear Spare Rib,

In your reports on the Edinburgh Conference Faith McDevitt said there were attempts by "left" women to "organise us into oblivion" and that "Home is where women are." The whole point of Liberation is that home is everywhere in society. To restrict it to the Women's Movement or to women in general is to accept ghetto-ization with its inevitable consequences of

1) suspicion, even hatred, of women who chose not to join the ghetto and 2) the constant policing of women in the ghetto to make sure their awareness does not change into something other than the currently fashionable definition of femininity put out by the dominant personalities in the ghetto.

Faith also mentions "Instinctive Feminism". If she had explained what this phrase meant I might agree with her that it is the next necessary step in consciousness-expanding; but I suspect it is as much a tyrannical stereotype as the male fantasy of the "Eternal Feminine."

To make loyalty to some ideal a prerequisite for listening to another's point of view is not sisterhood.

It is making the same mistake as women who accept the values of a patriarchal and hierarchical society make: that some people (whether by virtue of sex, authority or purity of radicalism) are entitled to define how others ought to see themselves and that the others must accept this manipulation through emotional blackmail and social and economic pressures. I am furious that the politicians were so contemptuously dismissed. Perhaps their approach at the conference was wrong; but they probably had much of value to say about the oppression of women by people in both sexes via power relations in our society (i.e. the social and economic pressures).

Surely Spare Rib could have given space to one or more of the "politicos" to state their points of view?

I am genuinely happy that the social activities at the conference helped women to enjoy each other but charity and compassion are vital in order to appreciate the attempts at communicating being made by all of us struggling through the defensiveness and hurt which bedevil all of us.

Yours,
Jenny Dennan,
London SW1.

Dear Spare Rib,

I was very interested to read the criticisms of the conference organised by the Extra Mural Centre of the Polytechnic of Central London on the Women's Movement. This was the first conference of its type that we had organised and we were very grateful for any comments that might help in the organisation of future conferences.

However, I'm afraid that we won't be able to take up some of the points made by Rachel, Helen, Joan and Ingrid. For example, when there is a limited amount of space and seating available, it is usual - and sensible - to have registration. Unfortunately, this means that participants have to be checked at the door and issued with tickets. This took much longer than usual, because there was, at that time, about three weeks delay in our local postal deliveries and many tickets sent out had not been received.

We would have been delighted to have had more voluntary help in the canteen and we don't know why people didn't offer if they wanted to give it. Nearly all the helpers in the kitchen and canteen were voluntary helpers; some of them spent almost the entire conference helping to prepare food etc. We have decided not to offer lunch at our next conference, but, instead, to have a two hour lunch break. In that way, everyone attending the conference will be able to take part in the workshops etc.

It may well be that Juliet Mitchell's lecture was more suitable for a post graduate sociology seminar.

However, the other lectures were very clear and addressed to a general audience, and were much appreciated by those who heard them. I agree that we ought to be very careful in the style of presentation - very often a lecture gains by being put into simple language which is easily accessible to everyone. That is a point that will be stressed in our organisation of future conferences. We took everyone's name and address so that they could be sent the follow up report of the conference and might be informed of future conferences and courses. At the moment we are running a course on Tuesday afternoons on Women in Fiction, next January we start an evening course on Wednesdays on the Politics of the Women's Movement. Many different speakers will be taking part. On Nov 30th/Dec 1st 74 we are running a conference in conjunction with the N.C.C.L. on various aspects of Women's Rights. This will be a very practical conference with an emphasis on study workshops.

I think that it is very important to provide an opportunity for women to come together to study and discuss the problems of women's oppression. After the conference on the Women's Movement, we received many letters of thanks; a large number of them said that it was the best organised women's conference they had attended. However, that doesn't

mean that we can't improve on matters. With the constructive advice of our sisters - We shall!

Yours,
Irene Brennan,
Extra Mural Department,

Polytechnic of Central London.
104-108 Bolsover St, W.C.1
P.S. I would be delighted to hear from anyone with any comments or queries. Please write to the above address, or phone 636-4991 ext. 36

Racist Sensationalism?

Dear Spare Rib,

Anne Doggett's article on India was so full of errors as to lose all credibility and the way it was presented on the cover and on the title page can only be described as racist sensationalism. India - Eve Teasing, Widow Burning suggests that widow burning takes place in India now; it is like describing Australia as a convict colony or Britain as the country of public hangings.

Just a few of the factual errors are: Women are marginal in the building industry work force. No, they are the main work force.

'Petit-bourgeois Muslim women - not so much upper caste, or lower caste, i.e. women workers - are still in purdah . . .' This is meaningless, there is no caste among Moslems. 'Petit-Bourgeois' and 'worker' is an obvious contradiction.

The 'Nationalist Congress Party', mentioned twice, should be the Indian National Congress which is not a nationalist party.

An error which I think shows what is wrong with the whole article is 'All Hindu women wear saris . . .' In fact Hindu women from Punjab (and there are a lot of them in Delhi which Anne Doggett visited) don't wear saris and many Moslem women do. This suggests that Ms Doggett tried to classify Indian women into religious and social groups by looking at them (sari-wearers as Hindus etc.) just as people learn about the social behaviour of Chimpanzees by outside observation. She could have tried talking to a few ordinary women instead. Could she speak any Indian language? I am sure women from a white country would not be described from such an outside viewpoint. It is as though a group of women had been described by a man who watched them but never spoke to them.

We are given a series of amazing facts about India but they are not related to any known political structure. The effect of imperialism on the position of Indian women is not discussed and the women revolutionaries now serving long-term prison sentences are not mentioned. Yours sincerely,
Amrit Wilson,
London, S.W.11

IN REPLY

I was pleased to see that Amrit Wilson wrote to Spare Rib criticising my interview on India as I had planned to

write myself and it therefore places what I wanted to say in a more serious context.

Firstly, I fully agree with all she has said about the interview, i.e. that it failed to be presented both within a political structure and in a factual way. Consequently, the article has lost all credibility. Secondly, there are a number of reasons why this has occurred and it is on these that I wish to write.

(i) I was not shown the article before it went to print and hence had no idea what had been taken from my interview - which was long, rather casual and relatively unstructured, although I felt that it did focus on the area I considered important, the economic and political context;

(ii) This meant that not only could I not correct my own errors and sloppy thinking (and I am fully aware of the errors in the article, e.g. All Hindu women wear saris) but more importantly, it meant that I had no control over what was chosen from the interview as important to publish. In fact, I was surprised and disturbed by some of the material that was chosen as I thought it shifted my original emphasis from the political to the personal, dealt with irrelevant details, and in so doing trivialised the situation in India now - which is extremely critical both in political and economic terms.

I think this happened basically for two reasons. Firstly, my lack of thorough knowledge in this area and the difficulties in placing an analysis of the position of women firmly within a political framework; and secondly, the tendency of Spare Rib itself to personalize and neutralize political issues. The words on the cover and title pages 'Eve-teasing and Widow-burning' are examples of this approach. I think this is crucial for Spare Rib to face if it is to make a serious attempt to precisely reflect the variety of analyses within the Movement and not merely blur the differences into a hazy but glib journalistic.

However, this does not excuse the fact that I did not insist on seeing the article before it was printed which points to my own irresponsibility with regard to interviews and the loss of the sight of one's words as printed words.

I apologize for any confusions caused.

Yours sincerely,
Anne Doggett

Spare Rib replies next month.

CENTRO INFORMAZIONE STERILIZZAZIONE ABORTO

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"Abortion" is a forbidden word in Italy. However women know only too well what it means.

The Italian penal and civil code sentences women for "crimes against racial purity" to jail for two to five years. In spite of the law, however, the economic and social problems have forced 3 million women to have abortions every year. Every year 2000 Italian women die from illegal abortions performed by back-street abortionists who operate with knitting needles, soapy water and parsley.

Usually men can find 1000 pretexts to avoid their responsibility: "I can't be sure this son is mine"; "That's your problem, darling. I'm not pregnant"; "It's your decision". Some men simply disappear. The women cannot evade the problem.

In Italy a group of women formed in September 1973 to try to confront the abortion problem. They collected signatures and support and formed a centre for information on abortion and

contraception. C.I.S.A. (Centre Information Sterilisation Abortion) is in the same room as a radical party office in Milan. The first aim is to help women who need abortions; the second to educate all women about abortion, contraception and reproduction; the third to publish data about scientific research in this area and finally, to promote change of the present unjust penal code. It's encouraging that at least some women are trying to do something on their own instead of passively waiting for others to do it. That way nothing changes.

At the beginning the group was composed of only 4 women, but now there are many volunteer advisers. There are 2 doctors connected with C.I.S.A.; they perform abortions by the Karman method (vacuum aspiration). Women more than three months pregnant are sent abroad. The psychological support offered is as important in many cases as the practical help given.

After many years of having hidden

their problems from their families, and after having been offended and condemned as murderers, they can finally explain and talk about their experience and express what they are feeling. Above all, they are listened to. Normally women are not listened to but only receive patriarchal and doctrinaire instruction. They are manipulated in the family, in the educational system, and in the society at large.

Although effecting no great social change as yet, the help offered is considerably better than nothing. Since September 1973 C.I.S.A. has performed 1847 abortions by vacuum aspiration.

Adele Faccio, a 50 year old ex-professor of ancient languages, was a main force behind the creation of the centre. If legally necessary, she will accept responsibility for what happens there, but other women have learned to take initiatives at the centre.

Instead of quoting statistics, it is better to let women speak for themselves:

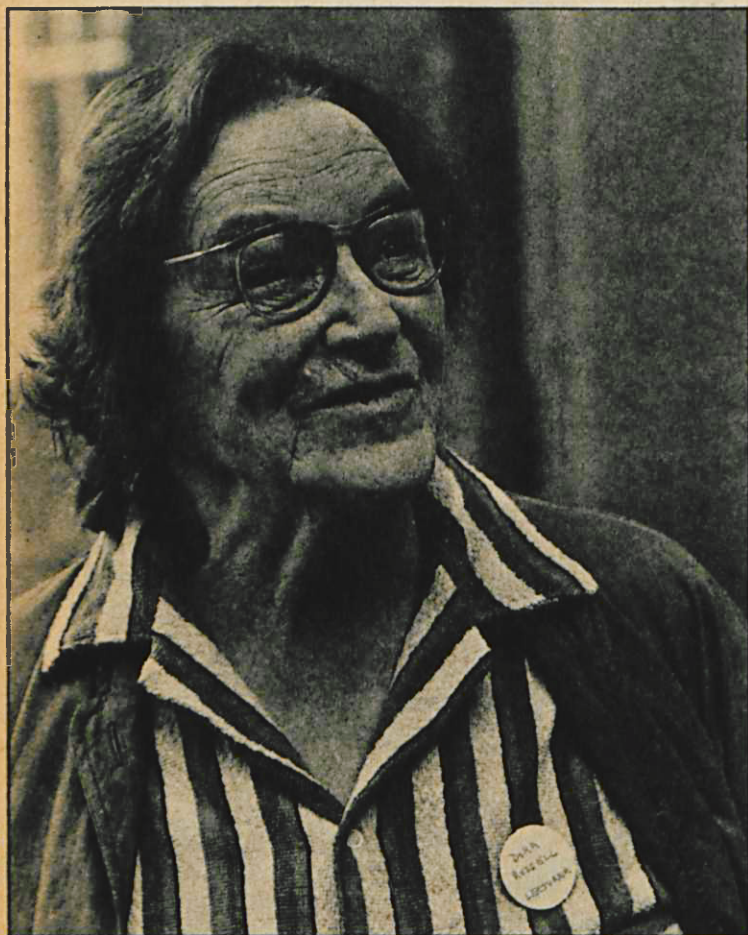
"I'm 30 years old and I've been married for 10 years. I work as assistant in a clothes shop. I'm on my feet all day. I can put my 3 children in the school or in the creche, but when I come back from work I have to look after them. I can't speak or communicate or relax with my husband because I've no time. I've begun to hate the children because I feel too tired all the time. I would have had only 1 child but my 3 are girls and my husband wants a son. I don't want another child even if it is a son. I feel I can't cope any more. When my husband comes home he doesn't help me, he claims he loves the children but he doesn't look after them, and he is obsessed by the idea of having a son to carry on the family name. I'm going to have an abortion anyway. My body is mine. I'm 30 and I look older. My husband doesn't want me to take the pill or any other precaution because he thinks: 'What will people say about my wife? This is a woman who doesn't want children so she behaves like a prostitute.' My mother-in-law also blames me, saying the children are a present from God and I'm going to be cursed by Him. But my life is just hell now."

The biggest difficulties the people have to face come from the Catholic cultural tradition. People may know that they cannot afford to have children, or they may not feel like having them, but the threat of the Church hangs over their heads. They are sinners if they do not obey the ancient precept "go and multiply". The Church does not consider that this might have applied in ancient times, when the world had to be populated, but not today. Women, however, are beginning to refuse the exclusive role of mother and wife, and are determined not to be mere reproductive machines.

In a related series of actions, many feminist groups demonstrated in July and August, carrying placards and shouting slogans "Abortion free and professional"; "our bodies belong to us"; "we are not killers"; "if men could become pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament"; "Motherhood yes, but by our own choice". They also conducted sit-ins and hunger strikes to exert pressure on the Italian Parliament to discuss the liberalisation of the abortion laws. In this they had the support of a radical party. As a result of their action, an abortion Bill was discussed in Parliament in September.

A social research group called Demoscopea-Panorama conducted a poll and interviewed 1000 people. About 75% replied that they wanted this law discussed, as it represents a major problem. They also believed that it did not concern the Church.

Manuela Lombardo



Dora Russell

"BRITISH TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND"

Everyday Irish women in the 6 Counties are faced with the BRITISH ARMY - raiding their homes, interning them (over 60 women now interned in Armagh gaol), and subjecting them to daily sexist and racist abuse.

SUPPORT IRISH WOMEN BY JOINING THE MARCH - SUNDAY - OCTOBER 27 - LONDON. Assemble at Clerkenwell Green EC1 at 2pm. March to Fleet St. and Whitehall. Sponsored by Troops Out Movement, Simon De Beauvoir, Maureen Colquhoun M.P., Stan Thorne M.P.

Demonstration!

Homosexuality, by threatening the family and the heterosexual norm, threatens the whole male-dominated structure of our society.

Lesbians in defining their sexuality apart from men are in the vanguard of the women's movement.

Gay men, in rejecting the chauvinist male role, are our brothers.

Women's liberation means total sexual liberation.



BMA House, London

GAY LIBERATION AND THE MEDICAL ESTABLISHMENT

Over fifty sisters and brothers from Gay Liberation Front, Women's Liberation groups, lesbian collectives and the Campaign for Homosexual Equality disrupted the British Medical Association's first national congress on 'psychosexual problems' at Bradford University in September.

After occupying the lobby, they succeeded in entering the conference hall and holding an hour long dialogue with the delegates on the subject of the morning... homosexuality. The whole action was highly successful. Following the dialogue (which many of the delegates described as 'fruitful and instructive') the university vice-chancellor, Dr Edward Edwards, offered the gay groups free facilities within the university to hold their own conference, to which doctors, social workers and psychologists might be invited, at a later date.

The sisters and brothers had not been consulted about the BMA con-

gress, where doctors and other 'experts' were to discuss them and their 'problems'. In fact a gay woman from CHE had been refused a ticket, although she applied through the usual channels. One of the conference organisers explained that they had been fully booked by the time she applied. However, several gay psychologists succeeded in obtaining tickets at a later date, simply by keeping their gayness quiet. As Bradford GLF stated in their leaflet to the delegates, 'Your Problem not Ours',... "A British Medical Association congress is a strange context in which to discuss homosexuality. It makes the fundamental error of assuming that homosexuality is a disease or behavioural disorder."

The three day congress, financed by Geigy pharmaceuticals, was organised jointly by the BMA and the Postgraduate School of Studies in Medical and Surgical Sciences at Bradford University. Over 250 doctors, psychologists, social workers and other professionals attended.

The congress covered such topics as the physiology of sex, the role of the gynaecologist, impotence, sex education. The third day, Friday, was, in the words of the organisers, to 'concentrate its attention on deviant forms of sexual behaviour which in their turn cause the human being to commit sexual offences. 'This session was originally to have been chaired by a high court judge, the Hon Mr Justice Waller, Judge of the High Court of Justice, Queen's Bench division. Thanks to the intervention of our gay sisters and brothers, the judge left the building.

The dialogue opened at 10am, largely thanks to the intervention of Professor Tom Stonier, from the University's Peace Studies department, who pointed out to the congress organisers that the sisters and brothers weren't 'problems' but 'people' and that the dialogue was sure to be instructive. The first to speak was Dr Donald West, who had to cut short his paper on homosexuality to fifteen minutes. Although

Dr West seems to have edged towards liberality since he published his book on the subject, I'd like to quote from a leaflet distributed at the conference by the Manchester Lesbians and Psychiatry Collective, *A Lesbian view of 'Homosexuality'* by D.J. West.

"This book (published in 1955 and reprinted at least 9 times) should really be called 'Male Homosexuality', as out of 280 pages there are six on 'Lesbian Types' and six on 'Explanations of Lesbianism' - which reflects the male orientation of the book. Considering the tone we should consider ourselves fortunate to be blessed with such neglect but it is typical of the emphasis of most psychological work.

"West stated 'Lesbians constitute a smaller minority than male homosexuals'. He does not give any evidence for this statement, and indeed it would be impossible to prove. For centuries, women have had their sexuality repressed and have not been able to express hetero - let alone homosexual feelings in public. Just because female

homosexuals are not as public in their behaviour as male homosexuals, does not mean that they do not exist in private in large numbers. Indeed, Kinsey etc., points to the widespread nature of lesbian experiences among women.

"West uses value laden judgements in referring to lesbians - eg 'Butch grotesques', and by insulting references shows a complete misunderstanding of women's behaviour. His descriptions tend to reinforce the stereotype that all lesbians are into rigid role playing of 'butch and fem'.

"Some women do view their lesbianism as a 'sexual problem'. This is not surprising if they read West's book and see 'frustration with sex role (in a society where women are exploited) is a symptom of lesbian maladjustment', 'frustration and tragedy so often attend this mode of life'.

"Lesbianism will be a 'sexual problem' if it is so defined and treated as a sickness that can be 'cured' by doctors, instead of realising that individuals have a right to a self defined sexuality."

West opened his speech by stating, "The origin of all human sexual preferences, heterosexual or homosexual, is an open matter." Having refused to commit himself at this point he went so far as to blame society for its prejudices, cautiously adding, "I don't think sensational confrontations are always the best way of changing society. "This seemed to be the view of most of the more 'liberal' delegates. When confronted they were prepared to concede the individual's right to a self-defined sexual expression, but nevertheless seemed to feel there was a valid case for 'treating' homosexuality. In other words using everything in - their power - psychotherapy, drugs, behaviour therapy, aversion therapy - and, as is stated in the BMA pamphlet on homosexuality, in 'extreme cases' brain surgery, to turn them into heterosexuals.

The doctors seemed unwilling to recognise that even though some gay people might believe they would be happier as heterosexuals, by supporting this kind of false consciousness they are simply strengthening society's oppression. . . . and from a very powerful position.

West's plea for an 'unemotional approach to the facts' was beautifully answered by Professor Stonier, a biologist, who pointed out that recent research into the behaviour of the early hominids had shown that sexuality among primates had not been defined predominantly by the reproductive process. Like food sharing, it was rather part of a co-operative reinforcement process, to support their life style.

During the ensuing dialogue the sisters and brothers outlined the role they felt the medical profession should take in regard to homosexuality. While in no sense a medical problem, homosexuality can lead to

problems within the structure of a heterosexually biased society. The following points were put forward in a leaflet to the delegates.

1 Surgeries, clinics, etc are one of the contact points people who are gay use, whether they feel bad about the fact or not. So these contacts must make serious attempts to create links with relevant groupings of the gay community (CHE, GLF groups, Lesbian groups, Friend, Parents Inquiry, Ice-breakers etc.).

2 In the absence of relevant professionals, efforts backed by financial support should be made to employ gay people who are capable of counselling in this area or can be trained to do so.

3 Let's forget the possibility of 'inducing' the heterosexual responses by whatever means happens to be currently in fashion. Nobody ever thinks that heterosexuals, whatever their problems, should give up being heterosexual.

What the potential gay person needs is advice and guidance in adopting a personally satisfying homosexual identity. If this is taken as a principle fundamental to treatment, the issue of when to use aversion or conversion therapy or other kinds of therapy (eg drugs) simply become irrelevant.

Most of the official congress seemed obsessed with the preservation of monogamous marriage. 'Psychosexual problems' were discussed in the context of threats to the happy family. It was however noticeable that some of the best papers were delivered by women, especially that on 'Non-consummation' by Dr Prudence Tunnadine, leader of the Family Planning Association Marital Difficulties seminar.

She spoke of her work with frigid women, pointing out the importance of reciprocity in the doctor-patient relationship. Her first approaches to the patient are always on the lines of "How do you feel?" and she added that she herself tries hard to remain aware of her own feelings - "Am I trying to bully the patient, do I want to mother her?" - as a means to understanding what the patient is asking of her. The whole tone of her treatment was geared to breaking down the patient's defences, giving her confidence as a woman and teaching her to know and explore her body.

Certainly a heterosexual bias was apparent, as throughout the whole congress when homosexuality was always looked at as, at best, an unfortunate problem rather than a valid alternative. But the sisters and brothers have made themselves heard. And some of the doctors listened. The sexual revolution may still be a long way off but the impact did not go unheeded. It will be interesting to see what happens at the BMA's next national congress if they fail to consult the 'problems' they want to discuss.

Roz Carne
Bradford Lesbian Group

Glasgow Womens Refuge

The Interval House Group was set up after a workshop on Mental Illness and Women at a Scottish Women's Liberation Conference in Glasgow in the spring of 1973. The group comprises members of Women's Liberation and women who are not involved with the women's movement. The aim of the group was to set up a temporary refuge in Glasgow for women and their children who had had to leave the family home because of eviction by the husband, violence, or other unsatisfactory conditions.

After repeated application to Glasgow's Housing Department we were finally provided with a three-roomed kitchen and bathroom flat which has proved totally inadequate for the problem in Glasgow. Glasgow Social Work Department gave us a grant of £2,000 to furnish and run the premises and, in fact, most of our referrals have come from social workers.

We opened in February this year and have already turned away over 100 women and their children because of lack of space. About 40 women have been given refuge but it is almost impossible to have them rehoused due to lack of private property for renting in Glasgow and because women whose husbands reside in Corporation (council) property are not considered for rehousing until their divorce is finalised and they are held responsible for their husbands' rent arrears. It must be said that these are not the policies of the Corporation but it seems to work that way in practice - either being equally deplorable.

When we opened we did so on the understanding that the next-door flat, also with three rooms, kitchen and bathroom, would be given to us as soon as the occupant was rehoused. Nevertheless we have been campaigning for additional, more suitable properties since we opened. The next-door flat is now vacant and we hope to have it by the end of September but we fear that restrictions on our numbers will be imposed and that other requirements may be made.

One of the most significant things which has happened in the last few months is that we were approached by a woman member of the Transport and General Workers Union in June who was interested in involving Trade Unions in

fighting to change those laws and practices which discriminate against women in this position.

An action group (Women's Aid - Interval House Group - Action Committee) was set up comprising members of the Interval House Group and Trade Union members.

The following four demands emerged from the experiences of the Interval House Group and were taken up by the action group:-

- (1) Several large establishments with play areas for children.
- (2) Elimination of practice or policy whereby the woman is prohibited from being rehoused, due to rent arrears incurred by the husband while he holds the tenancy.
- (3) Definite policy of rehousing women estranged from husbands, where one party has initiated divorce or legal separation proceedings.
- (4) Mandatory joint-tenancy for any adult tenants, male or female.

A letter enclosing these demands and requesting a meeting was sent to the Housing Management Department and also to each of the councillors who sit on the committee. No reply was received but we decided to attend their meeting in the City Chambers on August 21st and to lobby the councillors. About 30 people turned up in support and a delegation of 7 attended the meeting. Although our demands were not discussed a meeting was set for Friday 23rd August at which two representatives of the Women's Aid - Interval House Group - Action Committee put forward our case. Promises were made to look at the tenancy situation and to consider any empty premises we find which are suitable and suggest to them as a refuge. Since the meeting we have submitted several addresses. We had press and television coverage on both occasions.

Anne McGregor

Cleaners Strike at Vauxhall's

38 women cleaners, employees of South Midlands Maintenance and Cleaning Contractors, went on strike early in September. The women, who clean Vauxhall's engineering and styling block in Osborne Road, Luton, joined the TGW in March this year after their employer scrapped their weekly bonus of £1 for 'good work and attendance'.

By adopting a policy of not replacing women who left the job, the employers ensured that this good work bonus was not earned. The contract allows for 45 cleaners as against the present 38 who are employed.

Soon afterwards the Union district officer, Reg Thomas, approached SMMCC with a proposed agreement on wages, conditions and negotiation procedures, which, he claimed, SMMCC verbally agreed to.

At the beginning of September the company turned down a claim by the women to increase their pay by 13p per hour for a 20 hour week. Instead the company wanted to reduce the working hours to 15, at the same time giving the women increases of 5 or 10p per hour. This meant that some of them would lose up to £3 a week.

The women immediately walked out. Reg Thomas reports that the contractors have told the women that they will be paid £9 a week for 15 hours, irrespective of what the Union thinks. Meanwhile the contractors met Vauxhall bosses to press for more money so that they could pay the women higher wages, but without success.

The women see the struggle as not solely for higher wages but for better conditions on a par with direct employed labour, since contract employment - as in the case of the lump - offers none of the so-called 'fringe' benefits of safety, accident insurance, holiday and sick pay etc. The women, who have even had to provide their own dusters and clean their overalls, are also demanding 100% unionism for all contracted cleaners.

Vauxhalls have been steadily increasing their use of contracted cleaners while phasing out their own directly employed cleaning sections. The use of contracted labour saves Vauxhalls money since they have no obligations to the workers, who if they were directly employed would have to be paid pro rata rates to other car workers. These are much higher than those paid to cleaners outside the car industry.

"The strike became official after almost a week", says a leaflet distributed by Luton Women's Action Group, "with a strong possibility that if scab labour is brought in to do the women's work, both office and shop floor workers will walk out in sympathy. There are strong feelings from Vauxhall workers about crossing the picket lines and they have been giving added support and solidarity by throwing their rubbish on the floor. The women are also receiving support from their husbands, some of whom are Vauxhall workers."

"Apart from confrontations with the manageress attempting to bring in scab labour, the picket has been relatively peaceful, although the police have warned the women against 'communist agitators' there 'just to stir up trouble'," the leaflet continues.

Contributions to strike fund: Mrs McGuinness, 213 Park Street, Luton, Beds.

Picketing for Equal Pay

400 women at the Salford Electrical Instruments factory in Heywood, Lancs, went on a round-the-clock picket in mid-August following a lock-out by the management.

After six weeks' notice, the women banned piece work in support of a long-standing claim for a pay increase and equal bonus pay with men.

When the women ignored a management ultimatum to resume working the piece work system, one woman's time card was clocked out by a member of the management. The union, the AUEW, took this as a lock-out and the women, on £18.25 basic pay, downed tools.

After several weeks of picketing, the women's demands have still not been conceded by SEI, a subsidiary of the Arnold Weinstock GEC-AEI empire.

Last year SEI women members of APEX at their Eccles factory were on strike for 11 weeks over equal pay.

Mr Peter Branch, AUEW district secretary, said that efforts to get support from engineering union women at the Eccles factory had so far been unsuccessful. Help on picket lines had come from members of Women's Liberation, the International Marxist Group, and International Socialists, he said.

The management and union had been brought together by an independent conciliation officer but talks ended in deadlock and the Heywood women seem set for an even longer struggle.

Apex Ban Temps

The North-West area organisers of the Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staffs is urging its members to refuse to work with temporary staff from private employment agencies as from the end of October.

"We have taken the lead in acting against agencies and we expect other areas in the country to follow," said Mr. Peter Scott, senior organiser of A.P.E.X. in the N.W.

"A.P.E.X. has had a policy of condemning these agencies for some time, but we are now embarking on positive action," he said.

The union has requested employers of its 20,000 members in the region, 52% of whom are women, to terminate contracts with employment agencies. "We have been swamped with calls from members congratulating us, saying we should have done this years ago," said Mr. Scott.

The employment agencies have been growing very rapidly in recent years with some recording profit increases of over 100% in the past year.

The union fears that further growth of the agencies would be detrimental to its members.

Exploitation of temporary workers themselves also concerns the union. "Temps", only a small minority of whom are union members, earn slightly more than permanent staff but in doing so sacrifice any entitlement to redundancy pay, holiday pay, sick pay and pension benefits, all of which are major conditions of employment negotiated by trade unions.

"We are not opposed to temporary staff altogether," said Mr. Scott. "Temporary workers recruited

from the Department of Employment would be welcomed into our ranks."

The use of agency staff has caused controversy in strike situations when non-union workers have been seen as strike-breakers. At an A.P.E.X. strike over equal pay last year at the Salford Electrical Instruments factory in Eccles, Lancs., Alfred Marks Staff continued working until the union stepped in and the employment agency agreed to bring its staff out.

LEEDS: Fascism and Sexual Freedom

Leeds Trades Council has withdrawn support from the city's Anti-Fascist, Anti-Racist Committee formed a few months ago to combat growing activity by the fascist Leeds-based National Democratic Freedom Movement and the National Front.

The Trades Council is said to have shifted its allegiance to the West Yorkshire Committee because of a certain incompatibility with other groups represented, among them the Gay Liberation Front, Women's Liberation and the International Marxist Group.

Older members of the Council with a traditional trade union attitude against fascism are said to have been unable to agree to demands that the platform of the committee should go beyond equality in race to equality in sex and homosexual liberty.

GLF has been particularly vocal at meetings, not surprisingly since they have borne the brunt of NDFM activity in Leeds.

While the NDFM's leaflets demand the repatriation of all blacks, their actions have been to harass the white left and gays in the city. A clash with left-wingers during a demonstration on Leeds Town Hall steps led to court appearances. The GLF bookshop window is now boarded up after several panes of glass were smashed by apparent NDFM bricks. A general warning was recently made to gays not to walk home alone after meetings because of threats of violence from right-wing groups.

With the departure of the Trades Council, the Anti-Fascist, Anti-Racist Committee now draws support from more militant groups including IMG, Women's Liberation, Libertarians, GLF and the Communist Party.

Nursery Workers: posters and meetings

A meeting of London nursery workers at the beginning of September discussed the attempts of a few boroughs to organise inter-nursery meetings over the summer. Most of these meetings had been relatively unsuccessful, except for one in Lambeth.

Kittens for the Boss

In Leeds reputed millionaire David Gibbs is making a bid to enter the playboy world of Hugh Hefner, with a £200 a year club for businessmen.

A grinning Mr Gibbs (51), boss of a fashion clothing factory, told the local evening paper: "By the time

I've finished, everyone will have forgotten about Hugh Hefner's Bunnies."

Mr Gibbs' employees will be known as "Kittens" and he is presently negotiating with the police to see how far his "kittens" can go when it comes to soothing the tensions of high-powered executives.

"Too many men today are under the thumbs of their wives and families", said Gibbs. "They need somewhere to go to relax and have the

knots taken out of them after a hard day at the office."

There will be "no problems" about topless waitresses at his club but, he says, there are other areas of "relaxation" which need to be looked into.

If Mr Gibbs is expecting a little difficulty with the police on the finer details of the service he wishes to offer Leeds' wilting executives, he may find himself with more opposition from other quarters.

"The trouble is that such meetings tend to be dominated by management and it is hard for basic workers to speak their minds. Work place union meetings might be a better tactic."

An average increase of 17% for nursery staffs was accepted at a NALGO special group meeting on September 13th. "It's a step in the right direction", says the Nursery Staff Action Group, "but only a beginning."

One member produced posters for the Action Group and NALGO/NUPE, and the cost of getting them printed and distributed is going to be looked into - "How about getting the kids to help?"

The Nursery Staff Action Group can be contacted at 11a Aboyne Drive, Raynes Park, SW20. So far their regular meetings have been held in the crypt of a church near Victoria, but they are going to move the meeting place around in order to even out the travelling problems a bit.



PHILIPS

Nostalgia written for today is

Ruth Batchelor's

"Walk Away"

b/w Light In The Windows

6006 419



marketed by
phonogram



THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY

Zoe Fairbairns sifts the media...

THE NEW EVENING NEWS WILL MAKE YOU LOOK MORE ATTRACTIVE



The girl who reads the new size Evening News will wear the smartest clothes, go to the best restaurants and shows, find the highest paid jobs, pick up the greatest bargains, and know more about everything that's going on.

What could make you more attractive than that?

The new size Evening News. The News London's been waiting for.

Miss London

Some media reflections on woman's role: the first paragraph of the Times obituary of Judith Furse the actress on September 2 read: "Judith Furse, who has died at the age of 62, was one of 2 children from a military family to distinguish themselves in the theatre. Daughter of Lt-Gen Sir William Furse, she was born at Camberley in March 1912. Her brother Roger became a celebrated designer..." Michael Harwick clapped patronising hands in the Sunday Telegraph on August 25, following the BBC's decision to allow women to read the news on the radio: "there is something about the right female voice - a subtle blend of motherly assurance and sexual companionship? - that somehow adds to the credibility of what she has to say"... and Louise Eickhoff wrote a horrified letter to the Daily Telegraph on September 14, responding to the Labour White Paper: "Who, then, is to do the full-time loving and cherishing and home keeping without which the new generation cannot prosper or come to maturity?" Who indeed? Not Louise Eickhoff anyway - with a string of letters after her name, she signs off as a Consultant Child Psychiatrist at a major Birmingham hospital.

The press coverage given to Labour's pre-election White Papers on sex discrimination and on pensions was the usual dreary parade of old jokes, inaccuracies and irrelevancies. "Male midwives" featured more often in the headlines than any other single item. Rather less frequent coverage was given to the substantial areas of exclusion from the bill: inequalities in tax, social security, national insurance, student grants, family law, small firms and Northern Ireland... not to mention the church, the armed forces and, of course, the Royal Family. Gordon Leak of the Western Mail went so far as to pronounce (September 7) that the White Paper promised "total equality."

Anti-discrimination laws would not apply to the churches, said Mr Jenkins, because he didn't want to trample on people's deeply-held religious beliefs. Very liberal of him, but the logic is dangerous. In September, a Ugandan Asian man was found guilty of murdering his daughter-in-law; in his defence, he had claimed that she was unchaste, and "I have my Hindu faith, if a lady does sex with a stranger, it is not a sin to kill her, even if it is a crime in the eyes of the law" (Times, September 10); and another Hindu, His Divine Holiness Shree Pramukh Swami, visiting the Archbishop of Canterbury on September 10, insisted that all women must be kept out of sight, including Dr Ramsay's wife. Apparently, "if a woman happened to break through a crowd and touch him, he would have to fast the next day." (Express, September 11.)

Thank you, Julia Langdon, for an excellent column in Labour Weekly (September 20.) Beginning "attention all sexists," she described a recent visit to Transport House by a photographer who wanted to take

pictures of prospective Labour candidates wearing Labour party T-shirts. Two male candidates were found to pose, but the only woman candidate available was rejected by the photographer because she was over 40, and the photographer really wanted a pretty girl - any pretty girl, it turned out, would do - candidate or not. "Whereupon, a male press officer set about Transport House asking pretty girls if they would put a T-shirt on for the photographer, and a female press officer set about the photographer - and the male press officer too." Ms Langdon's column didn't say who won.

Some applause for McGraw Hill, the US publishing house which is sending detailed instructions to its 8,000 authors forbidding the use of sexist phrases such as "the fair sex" "sweet young thing" etc, and discouraging sex-role stereotypes in both texts and illustrations; and for the courts in California, Michigan, Iowa and Florida which are abandoning the legal practice that a woman's chastity must be proved for the defendant to be convicted of rape.

Finally, with no comment whatever, this reflection from Patricia Craig (Scotsman 20 August) on the benefits brought to the women of South Vietnam by Western culture: "To the beauty conscious woman, Saigon is a veritable paradise - manicurists, masseurs, hairdressers and dressmakers are happy to come to your house to attend to you and at such cheap prices... for those who care deeply there is plastic surgery... it is quite common to see even the poorest women with their finger and toe nails well polished."

ISOMETRICS for the Businessman

by Vic Obeck

MEMORY CHART

TODAY WE RECAP ON THE RECENT THREE ANTI-FATIGUE EXERCISES AND 13 ISOMETRICS FOR MEN - WHICH WOMEN CAN ALSO DO. REMEMBER - DO EACH EXERCISE FOR ONLY 6 SECONDS A DAY



GRID SEAT... pull up



Squeeze...



Pull on stomach muscles...



push head...



forward...



...to right...



...to left...



push-up...



Push out...



Pull on wrist, legs braced, push!



Pull head up...



Squeeze door-jamb



lift heels...



press doorway...



press doorway...

Daily Express

spare Rib

takes on the media

During the magazine's current financial crisis we accepted publicity in straight newspapers despite many reservations and much disagreement among ourselves. Even so we were repeatedly amazed at the inaccuracies, misunderstandings and crass sub-editing. With each article we became more depressed.

Titles like 'A newspaper office where men are taboo' and 'Are these the last of the libbers?' vied with 'Danger! These women are liberated'.

Rather than spend time pointing out all the errors, lies and distortions in articles written about Spare Rib we decided to put together all the aspects of the articles we most object to.

"Yes. I hate men and I'm in this game to make sure they're all shot." That's Marion Fudger speaking, 24 year old David Bowie fan and rock writer for women's lib monthly *Spare Rib*. But there's a tantalising firmness in her voice. Like so many libbers she's as attractive as she's repellent, as voluptuous as a starlet.



DAVID BOWIE

The ladies who produce *Spare Rib* are young and self-assured. They have the confidence of the pill generation. They know what they want and they're out to get it.

Curvaceous

"*Ink* was a heavy scene, man", muttered dark-eyed 29 year old Australian-born Marsha Rowe. You might be

SIX SEXY GIRLS IN LONDON'S NAUGHTY SQUARE MILE!

forgiven for thinking she's Maria Schneider, curvaceous 19 year old victim of Marlon Brando's aggressive lust in *Last Tango*—but in fact she's worked hard all her life. As a production assistant on Australian *Vogue*, secretary on *Oz* magazine and then ill-fated *Ink*, a hippie newspaper.



MARLON BRANDO

"My memories are painfully vivid", she wept. "These guys just saw a hole between your legs. So we got this scene together, man... a women's magazine which can really speak to women."

When I arrived there was certainly a whole lotta speaking going on. Lissom 29 year old childless Rosie Parker (nee Lane—one of the three Mrs of the group) toyed with a pewter bracelet while discussing an abrasively honest article on space-age kitchens with full-bosomed Wigan-born blonde Ann Smith, a recent graduate from London's prestigious College of Printing and *Spare Rib*'s full time designer.

Oppressive

"Can't you make that kitchen look a bit more oppressive?" whined Rosie. "I mean, we don't want anyone to know that a woman designed it."

"I suppose I could enlarge the sink and we could do a collage with some chains attached to it", suggested Ann.

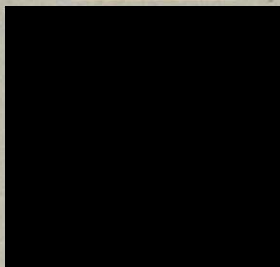
"A bit too like the cover of that other Lib book, *Woman's Estate*", snarled

Rosie, a look of irritation in her finely sculptured eyes.

Thoughtful 23 year old Oxford graduate Rose Ades—advertising and literary manager... "womanager", she called it—looked up from her messy desk. Her soft eyes couldn't help but twinkle at this candid exchange.

Over several pints of bitter in the girls' local in London's busy Newburgh Street, they told me their view of the Lib organisation. "We see ourselves firmly at the centre of things. We've always made a point of being available to the media as spokesmen for the more moderate Lib position."

Extremism



"Women's lib couldn't possibly survive without star personalities", confided the

drunken Marsha. "Where would the organisation be without Germaine Greer. Jill Tweedie, Mary Stott? We need them because of their influence in high places."

Famous

The girls dismissed the much-vaunted "consciousness-raising" of the movement as "chatter" and spoke frankly of the benefits of being famous libbers. "I never used to go to parties, and now there's one every other night", chimed in curly-headed Marion.

"I even got to touch Lou Reed last week", she giggled. Women!



LOU REED

CUTLERY HOLLOWARE EPNS & STAINLESS STEEL



G. A. BAKER (PLATERS) LTD.

Dear Sisters,
I enclose a cutting of an advertisement taken from the *Caterer and Hotelkeeper* for your Sell-Out section.

I have written to the firm in my capacity as a Hospital Catering Officer complaining in the strongest terms about their sexist advertising, and informing them that I will black their firm's products and encourage as many colleagues as possible to do likewise.

Faternally, Ingrid Falconer, Leeds 8.

INDEPENDENCE DAY FOR HOUSEWIVES.

A few hours of your time each week will provide you with financial independence. Spend this time as a S.I. Ivel

is the **Dairymaid**

CLACTON area

It's responsible but simple work (visit supermarkets, Cash and Carry stores and ensure S.I. Ivel products are priced and displayed). It's local work and it pays well.

Like to know more? Then write to our local supervisor giving brief details about yourself and include your home telephone number if applicable.

Mrs. J. P. Findlay, 9 Mount Road, Clacton, Essex

P.S. There's a modern dress/overall provided designed by Hardy Amies 24/7



Dear Spare Rib,
What price independence? This advertisement appeared in our local paper this week, the *East Essex Gazette*. As you see, the work is "simple" and the uniform designed by Hardy Amies. What more could a housewife want?
Yours sincerely,
Cynthia Garlick,
Frinton-on-Sea, Essex.

CLASSIFIEDS

GENERAL

Feminist Books would like to receive manuscripts - fiction/children's stories (age 7 yrs up). Also, we are thinking about editing a (non-theoretical) book about women's sexuality, so we'd like to receive personal statements, short stories, interviews, cartoons etc. Feminist Books, P.O. Box HP5, Leeds LS6 1LN.

Play about gay women, pseudo documentary, rejected by BBC. Any offers, suggestions? Box no. 291

We would like to hear the experiences (good or bad) of anyone who's used a Dalkon Shield (IUD) for a future report. Please write to Jill c/o Spare Rib. Information confidential.

Business woman, 39, self-employed, literary interests, seeks friendship of home loving, kind woman 24 - 50, no ties, view making home sea or country. Sussex. Box no. 292

Female/female exclusive introductions: highly confidential service for release, friendship, liberation, etc. SAE - "Lesbos and Anisdn" The Golden Wheel Liverpool L15 3HT

HUMANISTIC and FEMINIST Therapy in London and Cambridge. Free initial interview phone 01-402 9475 leaving name and phone number

Women At Home can study for interior design diploma through accredited correspondence course. Colour prospectus from Dept. SR, Rhodac International, School of Design, Rhodac House, Yalverton, Devon PL20 6DY

BOOKS ETC.

Women's Liberation Workshop, 38 Earlham St, London WC1. Huge range of books now available. Send SAE for list.

Women's Liberation Literature or any books. Send SAE for free booklet to H Rutovitz, 31 Royal Terrace Edinburgh.

Women's Books, wide range available from 11 Waverley Rd Bristol 6.

Edinburgh's largest selection of gay and women's liberation books and pamphlets available from Shirlee's Stall, Greyfriars Market, 14 Forrest Road.

New Design W.L. Badge 14p (incl. postage). Stop Rape American pamphlet on self-defence for women (illustrated) 26p (incl. postage) From Sisterhood Books, c/o 22 Great Windmill st, London W1.

SAPPHO, the only lesbian feminist magazine in Europe. 40p inc. post BCM/PE-TREL London, WC1 6XX. Meetings held every Tuesday of each month, 7.30 pm, upstairs room, The Chepstow Pub, Chepstow Place, London, W2, off Truscotts corner at the intersection Westbourne Grove, 3 Pembroke Villas opp. Odeon Cinema and Elliotts Shoe shop. 40p admission for non-subscribers.

Are you UP AGAINST THE LAW...? Then send for this magazine. 20p monthly £2.50 one years subscription (£6 to lawyers and professionals) Write to: 66 York Way London N1.

GROUPS

Legal and Financial Independence (5th Demand) A one-day conference to discuss the demand and plan campaigns: Sat 30th Nov, 10am-5pm. North London Polytechnic, Holloway Road (Holloway Road-B). 25p. For information contact Leo Wilson, 21 Castle Street, High Wycombe. Tel: 01-671-2779.

CLAP, Community Levy for Alternative Projects. Pay your CLAP Tax. Send 14½p in stamps. Or does your inspired project need money? Send maximum 200 words. CLAP c/o BIT, 146 Great Western Road, London W11. (01-229 8219)

Consciousness-raising Group. If you are interested in joining a group phone Sally. 01-450 5504.

Join Friendly Groups of young people (20-35) with similar interests going out together in London meals/films/shows etc. London Linkup: 278 6783/4 (office hours).

Anyone in Southport interested in forming a WL group, please contact Judith Rose 62 Hesketh Drive, Southport, Merseyside.

Homosexual/Bisexual Women join the Campaign for Homosexual Equality. CHE is your voice - make it louder! Meetings and socials throughout Britain. Send 9 x 4 sae to CHE (332), 28 Kennedy St, Manchester 2.

Anyone interested in joining a small new group (3 plus 2 children) living communally in a large house in Colchester write Brian, Hilary and Ray, 32 Wellesley Road. Ultimate aim - active socialist non-nuclear family group.

Co-ownership Co-operative: We are setting up a communal house within commuting distance of Edinburgh and Glasgow. Need others with varied skills. Capital would help! Phone Rhona 031-447 3885.

Homosexual Women and Men can ring ice-breakers on 01-274 9590 every evening of the year between 7.30 & 10.30 to talk over their problems with other gay people.

SERVICES

SPECIAL NEXT MONTH:
Spare Rib's
BABY CARRIER



Gentle Ghost Help, Advice and information. If there is no-one you can share your problems with or if you are suffering from the unrealities of our materialist society, come along to 33 Norland Rd., W11. (2nd floor) where there will be someone you can talk to (in private); or phone 01-603-8983 Mon-Sat 10am-6pm.

CARPETS EX-EXHIBITION (Ideal Home/Olympia/Film Sets) 20p-83p per Sq yd. Half a million pounds worth of new carpets, bedding and furniture in stock. Vast selection. Tretford cord half prices! Immediate delivery or cash & carry. Fitting within days. Expert mail order service. Estimates free. Our home advisory service is as near as your telephone: 01 579 2323. 9am - 6pm. Early closing Monday, late night Friday 8pm.



Sapphire Carpets & Furniture Warehouse, 14-16 Uxbridge Road, Ealing, W5. (Car park alongside Ealing Town Hall).

Woman Psychotherapist (Jungian) now has vacancies Highgate area Tel: 01-348 5593

Gentle Ghost services include: artists cooking, decorating, domestic services, dressmaking, gardening, journalism, research, removals, secretarial and teaching; but try us for anything and we may be able to help. 01-603 2871 services; 603 2865 removals; 603 3729 restaurant, 603 8983 help advice and information. 33 Norland Rd; London W11.

NATURAL CHILDBIRTH SERVICE.

Childbirth can be a most incredible experience, but unfortunately modern obstetrics, instead of heightening this experience, detracts from it. Women are increasingly realising this and to provide an alternative to hospital confinement we are offering a home delivery service, usually using the Leboyer method of delivery. Our service will include ante-natal care, advice exercises and post-natal care. Further information contact Judy Osborne SRN SCM. Tel. 01-883 5380.

CARREFOUR

personnel (Canada)

Many of our jobs could be got through normal channels (large agencies) but we have a few that are different. If you'd like to come to an employment agency that will give you an honest service call in at Carrefour

Carrefour

1 Long Acre

London WC2E 9LH



Tel: 01-240-3116 (10 lines).

If you're looking for a group to join ... travelling companions ... work ... have something to sell / or swop ... then run your own Classified Ad. in Spare Rib.

Rates: 5p per word, 10p caps. £1.50 for semi-display (semi-boxed ad.) 50p for box numbers.

Payment: Ads. must be prepaid and sent to Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh St. London W1A 4XS. Please make all cheques and PO's payable to Spare Ribs Ltd.

Conditions: Spare Rib reserves the right to refuse any classified ads.

Copy date: Oct. 24 for Nov. 20, Nov. 21 for Dec. 17.

☐ Tick if Box No required

☐ Tick if Semi-display required

I enclose £..... for no of issues.

Name:

Address:

Print your ad below in block capitals, one word in each box.

Underline any words you require in caps.

7		
10		
13		
16		
19		
22		
25		
28		
31		
34		

SHORTLIST

agit prop

Women at Work in Wales

A final reminder of the NCCL sponsored conference on Saturday November 2nd at the Great Hall, UWIST, Cathay's Park, Cardiff. Further info from Mary Slater, 47 Marlborough Rd, Cardiff or ring Cardiff 28908.

Vaginitis

Women are mobilising to overcome the ravages of thrush and allied vaginal diseases. To remedy what seems like a conspiracy of silence and non-cooperation from many doctors, Mrs Kilmartin, the force behind the U & I cystitis club, is organising self-help sessions for women. The London classes are on the following dates at 12 noon: October 21, 28; November 4, 11, 18; December 2, 9, 16 and at 7.30 on October 17. Ring 359-0403 for further details.

Other venues and numbers to ring for info: Brighton-Shoreham 2950, Manchester 4857169, Newcastle 654428, York 798060, Canterbury ring West Malling 842497, Glasgow ring Helensborough 6869, Bristol (provisional) ring Bristol 779831. A booklet on self-help will soon be available from Mrs Kilmartin, 22 Gerrard Rd, London N1 at 50p.

Working Women's Charter in Bristol

The Bristol Charter campaign is holding a conference on November 2nd at Baptist Mills Community Centre, Horley Road, St Paul's, Bristol. More details from Bristol Women's Centre, 11 Waverley Road, Bristol 6, tel: 38120.

Bristol WACC

Bristol WACC have been invited by Harlech TV to make a programme for their Friday night *Free Time* series. It's likely to go out on December 6th. Again more information from the Women's Centre as above.

A day to explore non-sexist teaching approaches:

Saturday November 9th, 10 to 5.30 at Holland Park Comprehensive, Airlie Gardens, London W8. Contact Liz Cohen or Sarita Cordell, 139 Hemingford Road, N1 tel: 607 1724.

Benefit Concert for the Windsor Free Nation

(Proceeds between Bust Fund and Release enquiry) Global Village Trucking Company Mooncalf (ex-Henry Cow, Gong) plus Cucumber Disco and Lights Friday October 25, 7.00 - 11.00 London College of Printing Elephant and Castle, SE1

arts

A portrait of Mrs Spinks

An exhibition by Eleanor Brooks, a visual exploration into the personality and life of an elderly woman which inspired the artist in a wide range of 2 and 3 dimensional material. A BBC TV film on this is expected soon. Usher Gallery, Lincoln, 19 October until 17 November.



Eva Hesse

At last we are being given the opportunity to see Eva Hesse's work in England. The significance of her art and the enormous influence she exerted on other artists has long been acknowledged in the USA but her work has never travelled. Eva Hesse was born in 1939 and died of a brain tumour in 1970. She pioneered the use of latex, fibre glass and rubber in pieces which are at once detached and structured, and sensual and subjective.

She said of herself: "I've been a giant in my strength and my works been strong and my whole character has it inside. But somewhere I'm a terribly frightened person." Mayor Gallery, South Moulton Street, London W.1., until October 31.

The Video Show - Independent Video at the Serpentine

As yet no women have submitted entries to the festival of independently made videotape which will take place at the Serpentine Gallery, Kensington Gardens, in May 1975. It is an open show with no pre-selection procedures; all areas of video activity will be accepted: artists' tapes, community tv, political documentaries, videographics and live video installations. Would-be participants are invited to send written information about their tapes, (whether already completed, underway or planned) to the Video Committee, c/o Sue Grayson, Serpentine Gallery, Kensington Gardens, W2 3XA. tel 01-402 6075. For more detailed information telephone Peter Bloch at 01-727 7244.

theatre

The Recruiting Officer by The Belt and Braces Roadshow Company

To describe in detail the show I saw in Portsmouth would be an anachronism because it is changing all the time. It is a living thing, but broadly the message is Capitalism's inhumanity to woman (and man).

The show is an amalgam of comedy, tragedy, musical, satire and pantomime, with elements of such diverse productions as 'Hair' and 'Close The Coalhouse Door'. The programme notes describe the play's sources: In an early bourgeois comedy called 'The Recruiting Officer', the Restoration dramatist and soldier, George Farquar, unconsciously observed the process by which the economic, judicial, military and sexist dominance of the ruling class of 1706

Compiled by Jude Harris
Feel free to send any information to
Shortlist, Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh
St, London W1A 4XS

were woven together in the rural town of Shrewsbury. Bertholt Brecht re-interpreted Farquar's work in the 1950's in the US under the title "trumpets and Drums". To show how a vastly more complex system directs and controls us, and yet how it is still as observable in our daily lives as it was in 1706, and to do it interestingly and entertainingly, was the job we set ourselves".

I contacted Gillian Hanna, one of the three women members of the group who told me that there is a "fairly vociferous feminist lobby within the group". She "would welcome an opportunity of putting to a wider audience of women the kind of things we are involved in". The company can be contacted at 14 Cathcart Hill, London N19.

The Recruiting Officer is being performed at the Oxford Playhouse December 6-7 at 8.00 pm.

Betty French

National Film Theatre

According to NFT Previews, *Caged* (USA 1950) "was a worthy return by Warners to the social realism of their crusading films in the thirties. Life in a woman's prison and the corruption of a first offender is depicted with a passionate indignation."

The Goddess (USA 1958) is about "an idol of the world who is completely impossible, and who cannot be wife, mother or human being, and who is completely worthless to be anything but a movie star." (David Selznick). Kim Stanley, who plays the heroine, "is only too believable in her self-destructive obsession with stardom."

Caged Sat 16 Nov 4.00 6.15 8.30

The Goddess Sun 17 Nov 4.00 6.15 8.30



Caged National Film Theatre

options

Role Swap Couples

It is generally assumed that the main breadwinner in any married couple, with or without children, is the man. National Insurance benefits, taxes, pensions, etc., are calculated on the basis of this assumption - which means that married couples where the main or the only breadwinner is the woman are financially discriminated against. It is estimated that a considerable number of married couples in Britain support themselves wholly or mainly on the wife's income - whether temporarily or permanently, from choice or out of necessity. It is time that this fact is recognised and the laws changed accordingly.

I am trying to produce (for the National Council of Civil Liberties) a report on the kind of problems faced by people in this position. If you are part of a married couple for whom the woman's earnings are the only or the main source of income, I should be very glad to hear from you, and, if possible, to talk to you about it."

Please contact Gillian Allnutt c/o NCCL, 186, Kings Cross Road, London, WC1 9DE.

Lesbians and Psychiatry

Dear Spare Rib,

A group of lesbians in Manchester are trying to write a booklet about lesbians and their experiences of medical and other professional organisations.

Since by its very nature society is heterosexually dominated lesbians experience particular problems and they see the main problem as their individual lesbianism rather than as a result of society's attitude to their Sexuality. As a result, they feel isolated and find that the people they can turn to for help and understanding are restricted, therefore, they turn to professional people, such as their doctor, for assistance.

So begins the long process of being seen by social workers, psychiatrists and other 'well intentioned' people who base their advice on any source of information other than from lesbians themselves.

We would like to hear from lesbians who have had experiences of professional bodies whether these experiences were good or bad. We would particularly like to know what kind of assistance women found valuable and constructive in addition to adverse criticisms and obviously confidentiality will be respected.

Yours sincerely,
The Lesbians and Psychiatry Collective
4 Manor Park Road,
Glossop,
Derbyshire.

Alternative Families and Alternative Life Styles

I am writing a non-fiction book about these to try and explode the myth that the only happy set-up are Mum, Dad and the Kids. It isn't important if the set-ups aren't based on the forever and ever concept but rather that they are there and that they are functioning backgrounds to people's lives. If any readers would like to write to me about the possibility of me interviewing them for inclusion in my book I would be delighted."

Nell Dunn c/o Spare Rib.

The One Parent Family in Our Society

Joint weekend conference organised by National Council for One Parent Families and the Progressive League, Friday November 1st - Sunday November 3rd, at High Leigh, Hoddesdon, Herts.

Discussions on social work with single mothers, emotional and social problems of the lone parent, parental need of the child, welfare rights and legal problems of one parent families.

Programme enquiries to the Director, National Council for One Parent Families, 255 Kentish Town Road, London NW5 2LX. Full fee of £7.50 must accompany each booking. Cheques made payable to the Progressive League and sent to Kenneth Dobbie, 162 Gunnersbury Avenue, W3 8LB.

publications

You can't Judge a Book by looking at the cover

...the democratic charade exposed. A careful dissection of the process of local government in the borough of Croydon, unravelling the enigmatic web of relationships that lubricate its machinery, an assumed community of interest that unites councillors, developers, magistrates, local businessmen. Acted out in the close-carpeted informality of the Rotary Club, this and other similar crystallisations of the Old Boy network function to perpetuate such assumptions and the methods used to implement them. While uncovering individual cases



of corruption, the Suburban Press are more concerned about the system that produces them. Lucid, intelligent presentation and a strong line in pictorial collage. Read it and take a long hard look down your own friendly neighbourhood high street. More details about this and other publications from The Suburban Press, 433 London Rd, Croydon.

Marriage Divorce and The Family by David Nichols

Published in collaboration with Edinburgh Women's Group, 31, Royal Terrace, Edinburgh. (From whom copies may be obtained at 30p each)

This is a 33 page booklet, which seeks to give a quick guide to Scots Law. The author says in the introduction that 'it cannot be emphasised too greatly that Scots Law is an entirely different system from that applicable to England and Wales, and goes on to say 'Without going into great detail at this stage it may be said that a person or by birth or residence acquires a Scottish domicile is subject to the family law here.'

It seems a great pity that Mr. Nichols does not deal in any way with what 'domicile' means, as a person both born and married in Scotland now resident in England could in fact get a divorce under English Law and as English Law provides wider grounds for divorce than Scots Law, this whole question of which law you are subject to seems to have more importance than that given it by Mr. Nichols.

Other than that the booklet is informative but written in 'lawyerese' language which seems a shame as it is not detailed enough for lawyers, but it is too formal for the average lay person, and nowhere near as readable as Coote and Gill on Women's Rights.

On a practical note any Scots woman could be advised that if she wanted to leave Scotland and live in England and Wales and intends to settle permanently here, she could get an English divorce. The advantages of this would be that English Law has wide grounds, i.e. divorce for being separated for 2 years with both people consenting or 5 years

HALLO THERE.....
HOW'S THE WIFE AND KIDS ?.....
SETTLED INTO THE NEW HOUSE YET ?.....

AH.....BY THE WAY.....
WE'LL HAVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE
COUNCIL MEETINGS BEING DISRUPTED. THREE
MONTHS RUNNING THOSE BLOODY SQUATTERS
AND HOMELESS HAVES CAUSED TROUBLE AND
FORCED ADJOURNMENTS.....AND ALL THESE
POSTPONEMENTS AND RE-ARRANGEMENTS ARE
PLAYING HAVOC WITH MY SOCIAL LIFE.

ANYWAY.....IF I DON'T SEE
YOU AT THE GOLF CLUB AT THE WEEKEND
I'LL SEE YOU NEXT WEDNESDAY AT THE
ROTARY CLUB DINNER AND DANCE.....

GOODBYE FOR NOW.

without consent. Thus a Scots woman married to an RC who will never divorce her could by deciding to live in England for 5 years obtain her own divorce. Once she obtains an English divorce, she can of course change her domicile if she wished to.

Marguerite Russell

Poetry Information

c/o National Poetry Centre, 21 Earls Court Square, SW5, 20p.

Comprehensive review of the poetry scene with latest info on books, magazines and events, plus articles. Of special interest is the brief reference to the Alice James Books cooperative, 138 Mt Auburn St, Cambridge, Mass 02138, USA, run for and by women and oriented towards the publication of literary works of 'professional' standard.

In response to criticism in Spare Rib 25, the editor of PI, Peter Hodgkiss, agrees that the sparsity of women poets included distorts the real state of contemporary poetry and would be happy to remedy this if more women submitted their pamphlets and magazines; everything received will be mentioned. Direct action obviously called for.

Man and Society

The first issue of the Albany Trust's magazine Man and Society to be published for two years includes a review of recent publications by Dr Charlotte Wolff, under the heading 'Gay Liberation in the UK and US'.

She discusses the evolution of Gay Liberation and compares it to Women's Liberation in that both are fighting the same enemy - the patriarchal society. The books and pamphlets reviewed - Gay Liberation Pamphlet No. 1: Psychiatry and the Homosexual, F.E. Kenyon: Homosexuality (A Family Doctor Booklet); Counselling Homosexuals, compiled by Peter Righton; Laud Humphreys: Out of the Closets; and Jill Johnston's Lesbian Nation - provide Dr. Wolff with a focus for the discussion of numerous key topics including the problems of simultaneously attempting inner and outer revolution, the identification of homosexuals with minority groups, the attitudes of psychiatrists and GPs to gayness, and the different characteristics of counselling services.

Dr. Wolff's review of Jill Johnston's book is typical of the tone of the article which mixes generous praise with precise and personal criticism. She writes of Jill

Johnston, "Her style vacillates between gibberish and sobriety, and the contents veer from repetitive confessions to brilliantly formulated ideas about the nature of woman - the lesbian in particular. Her claim that the lesbian is the true feminist, and that the Women's Liberation Movement can succeed only through awareness of this fact, is a case in point. I am in full agreement with her."

She goes on to criticise Jill Johnston's belief that lesbianism must be absolute, commenting, "She forgets that bisexuality is human nature, and apparently does not realise that commitment to homosexuality atrophies the desire for the 'other side'."

In her concluding paragraphs on Gay Liberation Dr. Wolff emphasises the importance of not neglecting individual identity and personal commitment in the struggle to establish collective identity. In her opinion the former is the "true foundation for a change in social values."

Correction

In Cecilia Vicuna's article on Chile in the arts section of issue No. 28 it was stated that Allende lost the election by only 40,000 votes in 1964 when it should have said 1958.

Arnolfini Cinema

'Coup pour Coup' review in S.R. No. 22 is showing at the Arnolfini Bristol on November 1-2 at 8.00 pm and at 5.00 pm as well on Saturday.

Women's History

Sally Alexander is teaching a course in women's history every Monday night at the Working Men's College, Crowndale Road, NW1. (Mornington Crescent Ø). The fee is £3.00 for the whole year 6.30-8.30 pm. Organised by WEA.

SELL OUT

Dear Spare Rib,
I enclose an item from the May edition of Fowl, the alternative football magazine. I do this reluctantly, because the magazine is a refreshing exception to the London-and-money dominated drooling of most of the sport press and television, and it has included good articles about, for example, the real nature of the violence on the terraces, and the unpleasant boardroom dealings in many of the big clubs. However, its liberated attitude does not seem to extend into sex equality, and since Julie Welch is about the only female who has managed to break into the utterly male-dominated world of football journalism, Fowl's chauvinism has manifested itself in what is virtually a personal attack on Ms Welch, thinly disguised as criticism of her prose style.
Love, Antony Collins,
East Molesey, Surrey.



THE NEW
Parole King
SINGLE
IS
"JAZZMAN"

Produced by Lou Adler



Ode Records ODS 66101

Advice...Info...Odds &

marriage

Dear Sisters,
I am getting married around Christmas time and there are one or two questions I would like to ask. What changes are the ceremony (Registry Office) likely to make, socially and legally etc? Will I lose my rights? I do not intend to change my name. Will I have to legally change it back to my present name? We are both students - how will our grants be affected? Also, what is the wording of the ceremony?
Estelle Clarke,
Birmingham.

* The answers to your questions are numerous and would occupy far more space than is available to me here, but I'll try and deal with a few. Yes, there are many ways in which a woman loses out when she gets married, legally, financially, career-wise and socially and becomes subordinate to her husband. For example, your income is treated as part of your husband's for tax purposes; any tax allowance will go to him and he will get your tax rebates unless you apply for a separate assessment. If you have been paying full National Insurance stamps, you get a reduced rate of sickness and unemployment benefit; if you rely on his insurance you cannot get a pension until he retires; you cannot claim supplementary benefit in your own right; your husband has to claim the married persons rate and you get less than a single person. If you work you are likely to meet with employers who are not keen to offer you work or promotion because of the assumption that you will leave shortly to have kids. If you want a coil fitted or an abortion or sterilisation, your husband's written consent is usually required. For a far fuller coverage of the pros and cons of marriage, essential reading is "Women's Rights, a Practical Guide" by Anna Coote and Tess Gill and published by Penguin.

There is no law which necessitates a change of name when you get married and you can change your name at any time simply by calling yourself by your new name.

If you are a student married to a student you get the standard rate of grant which is assessed on your parent's income even if you are married.

The wording of the Civil marriage is very simple and as the Islington Registrar put it, "There's no obeying or anything like that dear". It consists of the two following declarations:

1. I do solemnly declare that I know not of any lawful impediment why I may not be joined in matrimony to Y.
2. I call upon the persons here present to witness that I X do take thee Y to be my lawful wedded husband/wife.

dentists

Dear Spare Rib
Can you recommend an efficient method of tracking down a sympathetic female dentist? My husband and I choose to channel our many frustrations (met by

our teaching work and bringing up our son to be the partner for a liberated woman) by smoking, drinking tea and coffee ad lib, and grinding our teeth on very hard foods. Consequently we are continually breaking our already weak teeth and they are always stained. Another little lecture from a pig headed male-dentist will see some very real damage done. Trusting you will understand and sympathise.
Sincerely
Linda Jones
London N12

* I am very sorry that you are two of the many people who have had bad experiences with dentists, but I think you are wrong to assume as a result that all male dentists are pig headed and useless: my personal experience doesn't fit that definition at all, but maybe I've been lucky. However I am sending you the names of two women dentists in London that have been recommended to me, and I do hope this will be useful to you.

home deliveries

Dear Spare Rib,
I wonder if any of your readers can help me. My trouble is that I am five months pregnant and at the moment I am being bullied into having the baby in hospital, the thought of which terrifies me, but no one will listen to my objections. The worst of it is, it is a first baby and I am unmarried, though not single, which automatically worsens my position, because they think unmarried mothers are weak helpless creatures, also that they have always been abandoned by the father. I have had the same attitude from all concerned, that my views don't matter, that they have complete control over me and my baby. The hospital told me nothing, the doctor is completely unsympathetic to my point of view and obviously regards me as unco-operative and unstable! (I made the mistake of bursting into tears in front of him). I am now really furious at this sort of treatment I am getting, just because I am a woman and unmarried. I'm sure many of your readers must have met the same attitude from doctors etc. I am angry, yet at the same time I feel quite helpless as to what I can do about having the baby at home. I am totally fed up with being not listened to and not told anything. If any of your readers can offer any advice, especially where I can get sympathetic medical treatment, I would be really grateful.

Yours,
Miriam Belsey,
1 Barnstaple Street,
Reading, Berks.

* The question of home deliveries is basically one of a policy decision made at county health authority level and it is usually the aim of these male-dominated establishments to have every baby delivered in hospital. But there are occasionally pockets of enlightened attitudes within this framework and through the local secretary of the National Childbirth Trust, I found one existing in Reading. This is at Burghfield Common where the

local hospital and general practitioners are likely to view requests for home deliveries with more understanding, assuming there are no medical contraindications, than in Reading itself. The local NCT teacher in that area, Ms Leonie Smith, may also prove to be a good source of support for you. She teaches psychoprophylaxis, a really excellent method of preparation for childbirth and motherhood and is both sympathetic to and had experience in teaching and helping women who have made conscious decisions to have a child without marrying. The address of the National Childbirth Trust is 9 Queensborough Terrace, London W2. Telephone 229 9319.

depressives anonymous

Dear Spare Rib

I am very pleased that readers are writing to me about Depressives Anonymous. I will write to anyone who wants help, or who is offering help, but I would appreciate a stamped addressed envelope for a reply, especially as I have now prepared a newsletter, giving details of the progress made since February.

I now have groups in Bristol, Swindon, Trowbridge, Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland, Andover, Southampton, Hastings, Hook, Portsmouth, Havant, Winchester, Crawley, Horley, Redhill, plus small groups in my own immediate area.

Yours sincerely,
Mrs A.J. Stevenson, SRN SCM,
Depressives Anonymous
19 Merley Ways
Wimborne Minster
Dorset BH21 1QN
Tel. Wimborne 3957

sexual problems

Dear Spare Rib

Perhaps you could help us - we have been living together now for something like 1 1/2 years. At this time now we are seriously working through difficulties in our relationship, hoping to maintain a much more equal and independent way of relating. One of our difficulties has been sexual. We have now recognised and acknowledged this problem, and little by little things are coming together.

We are interested in getting hold of relevant sexual manuals, sexual technique literature, perhaps you could supply us with some information?

Thanking you,
K
Wolverhampton

* You don't mention exactly what your problem is, so it is difficult for me to say specifically what literature would be useful to you. But the book "Our Bodies Ourselves" by the Boston Women's Health Collective, contains a highly readable and sensible chapter on sexuality which deals with topics such as fantasies, orgasm, masturbation, and problems of love-making. It also has an extensive bibliography at the end of it

with suggestions of material that I'm sure will be of some use to you. For more detailed information and literature on sexual technique etc write to Forum magazine, 2 Bramber Road, London W14.

groups

Women in Bradford Gay Liberation Front have set up their own Lesbian Group. The group meets separately at 8pm every Tuesday at Flat 3, 2 St Paul's Road, Bradford 8.

Among other things we are presently working with GLF to set up a Gay centre in the town. The centre would comprise a switchboard and information service for gay groups in the North, advice service and bookstall. It could be used for social events, discos, dances and meetings.

Groups or individual women prepared to donate or interested in coming to meetings to find out what is going on should contact Roz Carne at the address mentioned above.

correspondence

Dear Readers,

I wonder if any readers would be interested in corresponding with me on the subject of Women's Liberation. I should like to learn about the various ideas etc; current in the English movement compared to the Dublin organisation. I would like to discuss my philosophy on freedom and perhaps exchange literature. I am 22 years old.

Renee Stafford,
17 Granthorn St,
S.C. Road,
Dublin 8
EIRE.

groups wanted

Ann Gunn
48 Brynglas Road
Newport
Gwent
Tel. Newport 56111 ext. 2413 Mon-Fri
between 8.30 and 4.30pm

Meg Wright
Belthorn
Blackthorn
Lancs
Write c/o Spare Rib

Maria Healy
39 Greenways Court
Butts Green Road
Hornchurch
Essex

Christine Thackeray
Rotherham
Yorks
Write c/o Spare Rib

Info...Odds & Sods...A

"I tried to make love but I closed up completely. It just makes you feel a complete failure."

Jo Mattison is describing the onset of vaginismus, a condition in which involuntary, often painful muscular spasms of the vagina, combined with a complete absence of lubrication, prevent penetration. It is usually psychological in origin but it may also be due to some local inflammatory condition.

Vaginismus is sometimes joked about but rarely discussed – even in women's groups – because people who have it feel that it is a shameful abnormality.

Psychoanalysts attribute vaginismus to an unconscious rejection of the female role; envy and resentment of men which can be traced back to experiences within the family. So some feminists see it as a defence against object status, passivity and dependence. But Jo Mattison's story shows that the origin of a psychosomatic condition can't be neatly tied up. Though theories can be helpful, any attempt at direct, simplistic correlation runs up against contradictions. Together with Anna Gillet, Jo Mattison unravels some of the strands in the history of her vaginismus.

What is vaginismus?

It's a condition in which the woman just can't have intercourse because she is so tight and any attempt at penetration is abhorrent. It seemed to be something coming from inside me, however gentle the man I was with. Invariably anyway they began to lose patience with me because I was so obdurate: it's not subject to any gentle persuasion.

When did it start with you?

It was a gradual process. I lost my virginity when I was 18 although I had had some sexual experience already. It was with a married man who was basically very fond of his wife. I took him very seriously and at the time was very involved with all sorts of mythologies about wanting sexual experience with older men.

Within a week he was saying that he wanted to stay with his wife. So my initial losing of virginity was a frustrating experience: it was incomplete sexually, it never came anywhere near orgasm, and I found the whole thing very unpleasurable. And then over the next months I had a succession of one-night stands, although with friends rather than the casual people you might meet at a party. And then suddenly about six months later I tried to make love with one of these people, and I closed up. I just couldn't make love, and it was totally tearful-making. I mean it just makes you feel a complete failure

How did the man react?

He fell asleep. He wasn't trying to be malicious, it was four in the morning and he was tired. He was quite fond of me, but he didn't have the emotional energy to take on what was basically a very heavy, deep-seated trauma at four in the morning, knowing that it was not something that could be resolved by a half-hour's talk.

And in the next four or five months I avoided sleeping with men, because I was afraid of my secret being apparent. This must be the most general problem for women who have vaginismus.

Why do you think you felt so isolated?

I felt that I was in a situation where I was expected to behave in an emancipated way but

Vaginismus

I tried to make love
but I closed up
completely.

actually felt incapable of doing so. This raises the general problem of what do women do, when they are in situations which they feel they can't contribute to, and which are moving too fast for them?

I was with people who were a lot older than I was, who seemed to share a set of assumptions about casual sex. I felt that I was really expected to be a similar sort of person; to sleep with the people I worked with one by one. There seemed to be a complete dichotomy between my external self which was efficient, capable and attractive in the conventional late sixties way, and the fact that I was an 18-year-old girl who had had almost no experience of sexual-emotional relationships, who took herself fantastically seriously and wanted to take others equally seriously.

You say you had a real desire to have an affair with an older man. Do you think that links up to your feelings for your father?

Yes, I think my relationship with my father was sexually ambiguous, in the sense that there may have been a quite strong mutual attraction, and jealousy on the part of my mother. My father would have liked a son. He liked me to help him with his handiwork around the house, and he used to take me off to hardware stores on Saturday afternoons to buy odd bits of do-it-yourself things. I do remember some happy times holding spirit levels, and being curious and inquisitive about what he was doing.

At the same time sexuality was a taboo area in practice, though not in theory: with a lot of rational sex education in my home coming from my mother. There was thus a gap between theoretical knowledge, of which there was a lot, and practical knowledge, of which there was none.

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being apparent.

So when you started to have relationships with men do you think that they entirely contradicted your early experience? I mean, with your father you had companionship but no sex, and then you had sex but no companionship.

But to go back to the chronology. Did you feel obliged to enjoy your sexuality?

Oh yes, completely. It seemed as if orgasms were what you had, and also in as many different positions as possible. I did feel very guilty about fucking in the missionary position – I really thought I should be swinging from a chandelier, or at least if not swinging from the chandelier then swinging from the bookcase, which was more the sort of environment I was in.

What happened after your first experience of vaginismus?

I was told to read Reich's *Function of the Orgasm*. It was painful for me to confront the fact that the discussions going on at the time around Reich and his views on the sexual revolution weren't academic as far as my life was concerned. There's a real difference between discussing a book from a position of empathy and from a position of intellectual appreciation. I felt I was more or less a relic of precisely the type of society that Reich described – a person who was incapable of living sexually. That seemed such a shameful thing in a society – or at least a section of society – which assumed sexual success.

I didn't dare try again in case I exposed this part of myself to yet another person who would then turn me down. I felt that I would present a whole heritage of trauma to whoever thought that they might have a quiet night in bed. Instead of which up comes the unconscious in all its mutilated forms.

So I severely restricted the occasions when I tried to make love, because it was so disruptive of my emotional state of mind to be given more and more examples of my inadequacy sexually. I just cut off that whole area of life.

In fact my vaginismus was not yet total at that time. I did begin a more involving relationship some months later, for once with a man who was free of other commitments. But I couldn't fuck lying on my back because that felt tight still – if I was on top I felt I could control the penetration more. I think at that point I still had a real terror of being penetrated, and fucking lying on my back seemed to re-invoke that terror. The terror was of losing control and not knowing what was happening to me.

I had been living in a shared house but needed reassurance. On the night that I persuaded him that we should live on our own, in a flat together,

I started having vaginismus again. I find this the hardest moment to analyse. I think it has something to do with my having forced permanence into our relationship.

Maybe it was a defence in the face of dependency. We lived together for a whole year and it was a masquerade because we weren't fucking. There was a lot of oral sex, but I never really enjoyed cunnilingus because my whole genital area was so sensitive.

I felt separated from my external persona. This was a recurring metaphor – this schism between the outside facade of calm and my inside world of terror. But we were locked into a bourgeois way of living: we had a rented flat just the two of us. The idea of leaving and setting up a new way of life, with all the explanations that would involve, and the recriminations, and the fact that the relationship was so transparently complicated and full of contradictions somehow paralysed me. The relationship was institutionalised because we were the only two who knew about me.

The relationship continued at weekends when I went away to art school in Leicester, but eventually the charade broke down under the strain. I began to get mild anxiety states. Because I was no longer seen to be in a monogamous relationship, I felt that sexual demands might be made on me and that I wasn't going to be able to fulfil them, and in the process my credibility as a human being was going to be exposed. I was convinced that people would be saying "Well, you know about her – she can't get it together – she's abnormal". Somehow it seemed an uninteresting version of abnormality. It wasn't a fascinating eccentricity.

Do you think your vaginismus was an unconscious reaction against the supposed passivity of the female sexual role?

No. In lots of ways I had never been a passive person. And externally I was still an active, demonstrative and sometimes creative person. My sexual fantasies were abandoned and bohemian: I wanted to be free and wild. The relationships that I would construct in my mind were exploratory and tormented, certainly not cosy or safe. It was my internal reality that was blocked. But I'm not sure that incapacity is a rejection of passivity.

So it was only in your fantasies that you were able to relinquish control. Maybe you associated sexual pleasure with a kind of abandonment which was at odds with your struggle to be self-directing in other areas of your life.

I don't know. But the corollary of what you're saying seems to be chastity, which is mere moralism.

Well, the model provided by your mother was perhaps one of sexual repression at odds with your conscious aims, for sexual liberation.

I think that's over simple, but I think it's more relevant than your previous suggestion. The structure of later relationships does seem to be in part determined by experiences within the family.

Yes. The reverberations are endless.

So what happened after the break-up of your first long term relationship?

There was a period of five months in which I pondered the implications of its breakdown, and why I had felt such aggression towards him. I had put him down intellectually but at the same time despised myself for this. The more I attacked him, the less I felt free of him because the more

withdrawn he then became, the more I was frustrated. At the same time I would rush back to a fantasy – any old fantasy would do at that point. I couldn't believe that I was this viper I seemed to be.

Then I started this relationship with a teacher called Ed and I really had hopes that we would have a mutually respecting relationship. I had long suspected that one of the reasons why I had been unable to do anything about my vaginismus was that Andrew knew about it. The sexual problem was sort of self-perpetuating because Andrew had never forced me to go further than I wanted. Both of us had accepted tacitly that this situation didn't look as though it was going to change.

**It seemed
an uninteresting
version of
abnormality.
It wasn't
a fascinating
eccentricity.**

So I decided that I would experiment with myself, and that I'd just try – I'd try fucking – I'd make myself do it – and if that didn't work I might try and seek some kind of psychiatric help. We started experimenting sexually, there was an occasion when he put his finger up my cunt. I was thrilled to bits, it was the first time in a year and a half that anything had been in my cunt. I thought that maybe this problem will go away now and I can be a normal person.

But lo and behold, that night – he went off that afternoon because he had to go to Birmingham – I noticed that I was tense, and that my heart was going quite fast, and I thought well this isn't very good. It felt like the symptoms of anxiety that I had been having for a year: fast heart rate, a sense of impending doom, destruction, death.

That night I couldn't sleep, but I was also getting terrified: I got the horrors and I began to think that I was dying – I really thought I wasn't going to last the night. I woke up the people I was living with and just clung to the woman for hours on end. She had to see me through it. The next morning I went off to the doctor and got some sleeping pills. I used to use the sleepers as sedatives during the day and zonk around in a bombed-out state.

What about your vaginismus?

We fucked a week after the night I thought I was dying. I began to think that maybe my amateur therapy had worked, and maybe all you had to do was just do it and the problem would go away. What in fact began to happen was that I had started fucking but my anxiety states got worse and worse. I was on sleeping pills and anti-depressants for six weeks, yet I began to have orgasms – more or less the first orgasms through fucking.

I felt that I'd solved the technical aspect of vaginismus but I clearly hadn't solved the emotional/social causes – I still haven't.

So in a way you suppressed a symptom only to have it break out elsewhere in the form of anxiety states? Yes. But the curious thing is that from then on I did feel less abnormal. I began to really enjoy sex. And I didn't press for therapy then, because I thought I could play for time – that if I carried on struggling to live, I might actually live. I wanted a chance to be a living person, rather than a dead person.

To what do you attribute the disappearance of your vaginismus?

I think self-hate is a central facet in vaginismus: precisely because if you can rid yourself of self-hate then you can see the absurdity of denying your sexuality. You want to allow yourself the creativity which you deny to yourself in being self-hating and self-destructive.

And self-hatred results in the projection of hatred. Yes. The cycle was completed really by vaginismus: a general circuit of impossibility at every level, rather like an electric circuit. The thing I haven't worked out is what made me lose my self-hate at that time.

Certainly it was new to me to be in a situation where I felt that this relationship would go on, that there was going to be trust and I wasn't going to be abandoned. I suppose the word abandoned had two significances in my life. It had the sexual significance but it also had the nightmare significance.

Women with vaginismus who consult a doctor may be referred to a gynaecologist or to a psychiatrist. Gynaecological treatment usually involves an examination under anaesthetic followed by the insertion of a vaginal dilator under anaesthetic. Operation to enlarge the vagina has been used in the past and may still be carried out by some surgeons.

Recently behaviour therapy has been used for treatment. Elspeth Spencer describes the technique used for treatment in unconsummated marriage in a recent article in the journal Medicine. "The underlying principle", she writes, "is that an anxiety response has been learned and therefore can be unlearned. Applying this method here, one can say that the contraction of the vaginal muscles in vaginismus is a learned anxiety response resulting from initial painful attempts to introduce something into the vagina." The woman is taught muscle relaxation, and, sometimes under hypnosis, vaginal dilators of increasing size are inserted over many weeks. Elspeth Spencer stresses the importance of also interviewing the husband (the patients were all married) saying that it is all too often the woman who takes the 'blame' entirely. But she cautions against the common idea that it is always shy men lacking in sex drive who cause vaginismus. Behaviour therapy treats the symptom not the cause, but the symptom with all its connotations of failure and inadequacy does create a vicious circle.

**Jo Mattison
would like to
hear from other
women who have had
vaginismus about
their experience
and treatments.
You can write to
her c/o Spare Rib.**



photo: Angela Phillips

ANNE DAY

Anne Day is Works Representative in a Stoke on Trent pottery. She has been working there for two years, since her third child was seven months old. Union rules say that you can only be Works Representative after one year's employment. Anne was elected after only four months because no other women wanted to give up the time for union activities. Going to work has made a big difference to her life. Two years ago she was frightened of meeting people and her only outings were occasional evenings of bingo.

When her youngest son was old enough to go to school, Anne decided to get a job, a decision that was temporarily thwarted when she got pregnant again. 'I didn't want her at the time. It seemed that she was a barrier to stop me doing what I wanted. But my husband said he wanted the child and he would look after her. That was wishful thinking, I suppose. He doesn't do nearly as much as I thought he would. Anyway, after having Alison I got very depressed. I couldn't stand her crying. Then when she was two months old I got pregnant again. This time I knew I couldn't cope so I decided to have an abortion. It was my decision, I didn't even talk to my husband about it. But it was a struggle, I think it's shocking; people in top positions can get one whenever they want. It's the women who really need them who suffer. I was already five months by the time they did it. A timid kind of person wouldn't have stood a chance.'

They sterilised her as well which, in Anne's case, was quite a relief. She feels far more independent knowing that she can never get pregnant again and will always be able to work. 'You'd be surprised', she added, 'how many husbands think, "My wife wants to go back to work, the only way I can control her is for her to have another baby.'

Anne went straight out and got a job. For the first two months she kept quiet and watched what went on. 'There were quite a few things I didn't like. We have to use dust for the porcelain. Often it has lumps in it which we have to sieve out before we can start work. This means we lose time - and money.' (Anne's job is piece work.) 'Well, I said, "I won't sieve dust unless they pay me". I went to the Works Representative but she didn't agree with me so I got an official down from the Union. It was agreed that I'd either get good material or get paid to sieve it.' A month later the Works Representative resigned and Anne was elected as her successor, a mixed blessing as she loses money for time spent on Union matters and has to attend evening meetings.

Her growing interest in work obviously had repercussions at home. 'At first, I had to take all the responsibility. Doing a full day's work and coming home to cleaning and cooking in the evenings. Then one day I said, "Sod to this he's got to do as much as I do and that's it". I still have to ask him to do everything mind you. If a bill comes in to be paid he wouldn't dream of paying it himself and it's even got to be me who wakes him up in the morning.'

At first, baby sitters had to be found for evening meetings. Now her husband stays in if he has nothing important to do. That has meant quite an adjustment for him. In Stoke men don't like to be seen with the kids, it's bad for their image, almost

as bad as it is for a woman to go unescorted into a pub.

'The men would drop through the floor! The only place women can go alone is Bingo. I went for a meal on my own once. You ought to have seen the funny looks I got. It made me feel like a prostitute.'

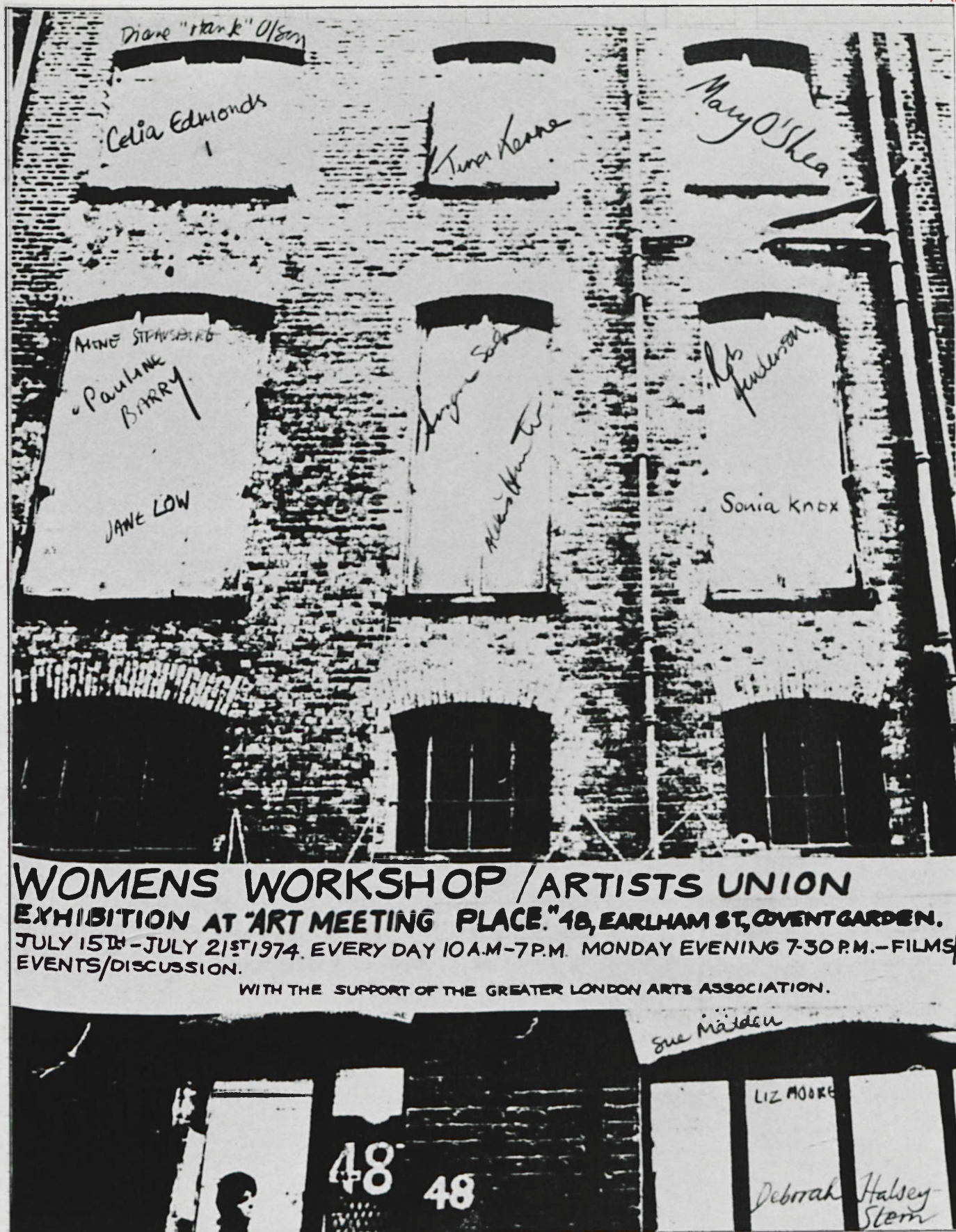
At a women's committee meeting of her Union, Anne heard about a women's liberation group run by students at Keele University. Out of curiosity she went along with one other woman but was very disappointed. 'It was just a bunch of students sitting in a pub. They wanted young wives to join but they weren't really interested in our problems. I'd expected an active group willing to give up a few things, even a few hours at weekends looking after kids so that women who are stuck at home all day can get a chance to go out. They wanted to know all about trade unions but they didn't want to work in a pottery in the holidays. They just wanted me to tell them what happened.'

After one more meeting, she gave up. Now she'd very much like to start a group herself but doesn't feel able to. 'It's the women who stay at home who concern me. Women need easier abortions, nurseries and childcare, but mostly we need places where women can go and talk about the problems they have at home.'

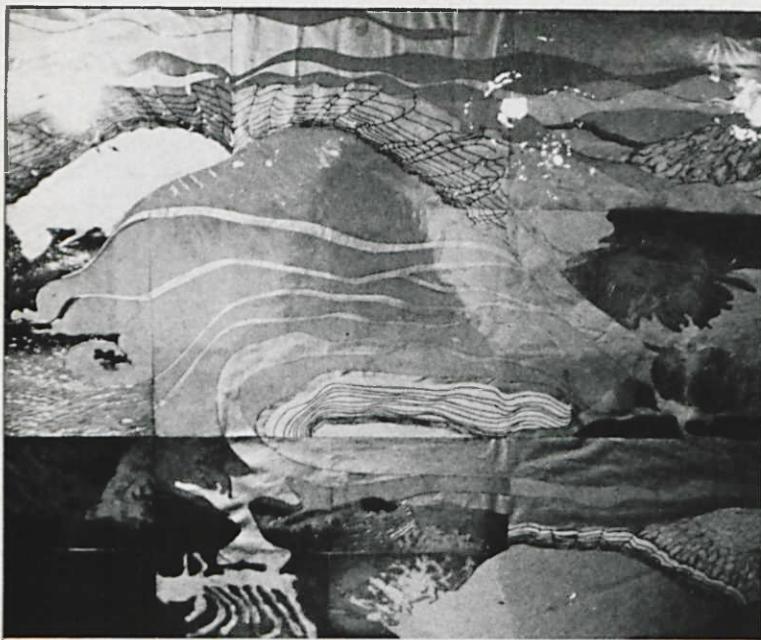
It frightens me that I seem to have come to a stand still. I wish I could find someone else like me, it would make it easier to work, but it seems that either you associate with people like the students who I don't agree with, or you're on your own. ■

by Angela Phillips⁵

Anne Day would like to hear from anyone who could help her start a group in her area. Her address is 25 Hardinge St, Fenton, Stoke on Trent.



We continue our series on the alternative ways and means of working and exhibiting which women artists are organising today with a look at the recent activities of the Women's Workshop of the Artists Union. The Women's Workshop was founded within the Artist's Union in 1972 (see S.R. No. 13), and members have met and worked together ever since. We asked them to use the arts section of the magazine as a catalogue of their recent exhibition at the Arts Meeting Place in London, and to provide statements and illustrations of their work. This should not be seen as a definitive description of the exhibition for two reasons, firstly because some members were away when we went to press and secondly because an article can't convey the exceptional atmosphere of the show. It became a women's meeting place - an international one as it was on during the tourist season - enabling the workshop to establish contacts with women in Germany, France, Italy, the USA, and many other places. ►



Mary O'Shea: *With thanks to Virginia Woolf.* Plastic bags, acetate off-cuts, tracing paper, silver wrapping paper, photographs and graphite. In the process of making this collage, I realized that, as with any artist, the circumstances of my personal life and my situation as an artist in society determines the content of my work, the possible range and usage of materials, and the form which the object or image can take.

Since I live on Social (in-) Security, my financial resources are nearly non-existent. More importantly, those non-existent resources necessarily imply very limited access (if any at all) to the more advanced levels of materials and technology.

Making this collage, therefore, partly meant using existing materials (ie previously accumulated old work in the form of photographs and drawings) in order to create a new piece of work. It became necessary to find a completely new and different process, appropriate to the new piece, which would transform and transcend the meaning and content of the new material. I also turned, out of necessity, to cheap and if possible free or discarded materials such as tracing paper, wrapping paper, plastic bags, acetate and melanex off-cuts.

Working in such a constricted context led me to think about the hierarchy of access to, and usage of, materials and equipment that exists in the "art world", which inevitably generates a hierarchy of object or image. Certain objects/images made of certain materials or with certain techniques acquire prestige merely by virtue of their level of technological complexity, and simply on that basis are considered more important, relevant, or significant by the arbiters of culture (taste).

There is clearly a relation between social and cultural privilege. In highly industrialized capitalist societies (ie the West), access to advanced stages of technology and the use of expensive materials are inevitably the prerogatives of a privileged few (generally white middle-class males).

Such an elaborately stratified society cannot possibly include many people at the higher levels of access and privilege, and very few of those people are going to be women - even token women. We see again and again that when technology in a capitalist society reaches a certain level it is used to impose or reinforce exploitative social relations. One of the more vicious circles of such stratification and exploitation is that science and technology, and therefore 'culture', tend to remain male preserves.

As a woman artist, I must question whether it is desirable for women artists to participate in and therefore perpetuate such social stratification, and ask whether it is just that the tools of society remain limited in use and availability to the privileged few. If I am not to be a "token woman artist" with the disproportionate access to the higher levels of technology and equipment such a position would give me (and I am not going to be), it becomes imperative to challenge the existing hierarchy of objects, image making, and materials which is imposed on us and surrounds us.

Given a situation at the moment in which my necessity and my principles are inseparable, it becomes clear that if I am to continue in creative activity with neither financial resources nor access to advanced technology and equipment, my only alternative is to concentrate on working with materials which are primarily cheap and easily available, or even free (an incidental benefit from the general idiocy of overpackaged goods), and to show how these materials can be used creatively, how their possibilities as materials can be expanded - not determined by or limited to economically exploitative factors. ○

The exhibition provoked many questions and much criticism; here some members of the group answer the most frequently asked questions.

Why didn't the work reflect a group identity?

We formed as a collective of women artists because of our common situation/condition. We share similar, if not identical problems of isolation; both from other women artists and the general isolation of artists in a society which is alien to collective creative activity.

Why have a women's exhibition?

Why does a women's exhibition always create that response? Most exhibitions are single sex ones (i.e. all male), and for as long as that holds true we have to promote ourselves and each other in a very conscious way. We chose, and feel it necessary to exhibit together - though some of us exhibit individually and in other contexts - to counteract prejudice against women artists. Nobody else is going to do it for us.

What about the women's issue of 'Art and artist' or the exhibition of women conceptual artists organised by Lucy Lippard? Surely women's particular position is now being recognised and wrongs are being righted.

It's true that a token, fashionable interest has been taken in women artists.

Why weren't you more selective? Many of the works were not only different in terms of content but also in levels of competency.

Who determines what is good? All artists share the experience of external definition - relying on external judgement. Women are particularly vulnerable, experiencing judgement within a male identified cultural context. Are we then to apply the same external definition to each other?

Much of the work seems unfinished.

What does a well packaged product convey? One can say things in a multitude of ways. It's really a question of conveying what one has to say in its most precise and economical way. It is this factor which should determine the image.

Your exhibition does not seem particularly feminist.

Feminism can be expressed on many levels - not just by the use of explicit imagery. And, as in any group of people, there will be varying levels of commitment and consciousness which will be reflected in the work. We convey feminism not only in the content of our work but also in its context: in terms of how we go about finding space in which to exhibit, finding and sharing financial support - £200 from the Greater London Arts Council which was used collectively in organising publicity and supporting each other. We give mutual support not only in terms of the exhibition but also by discussing each other's work, offering feedback, and extending facilities to one another. We meet regularly at each other's homes or studios - particularly at those of the women with children - to discuss problems and to work on activities. We provide for ourselves something which then gives us the strength to go on and to try to find space and to fight to extend our consciousness into the community or at least to other women.

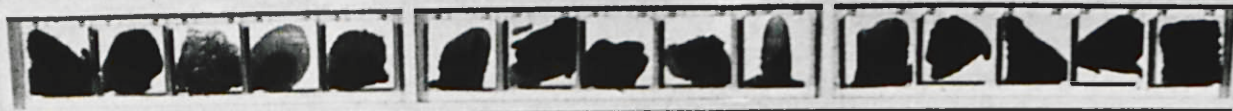
Are you an open group?

We are considering having open meetings once a month.

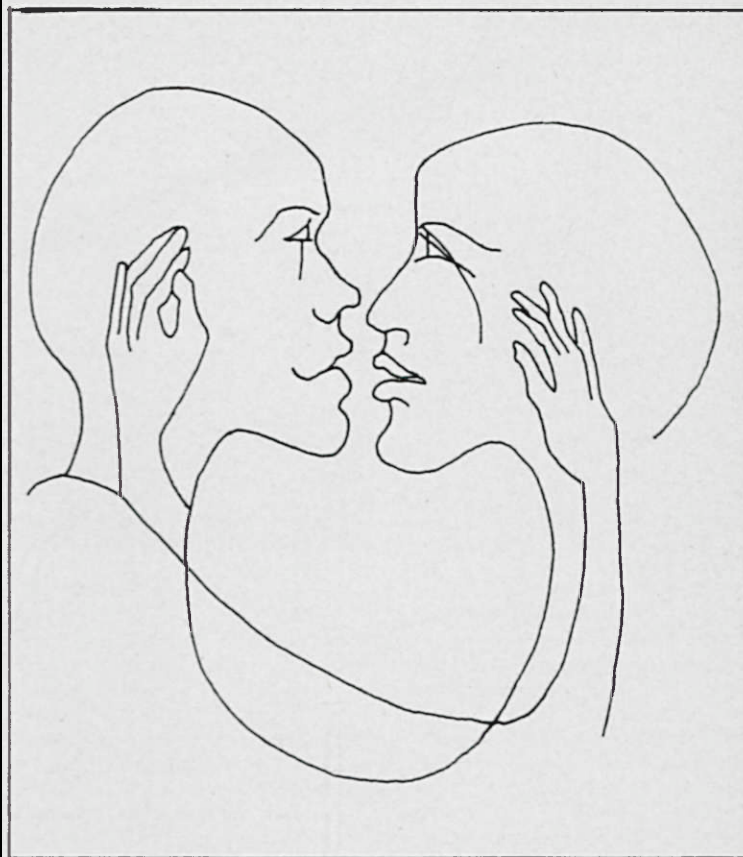
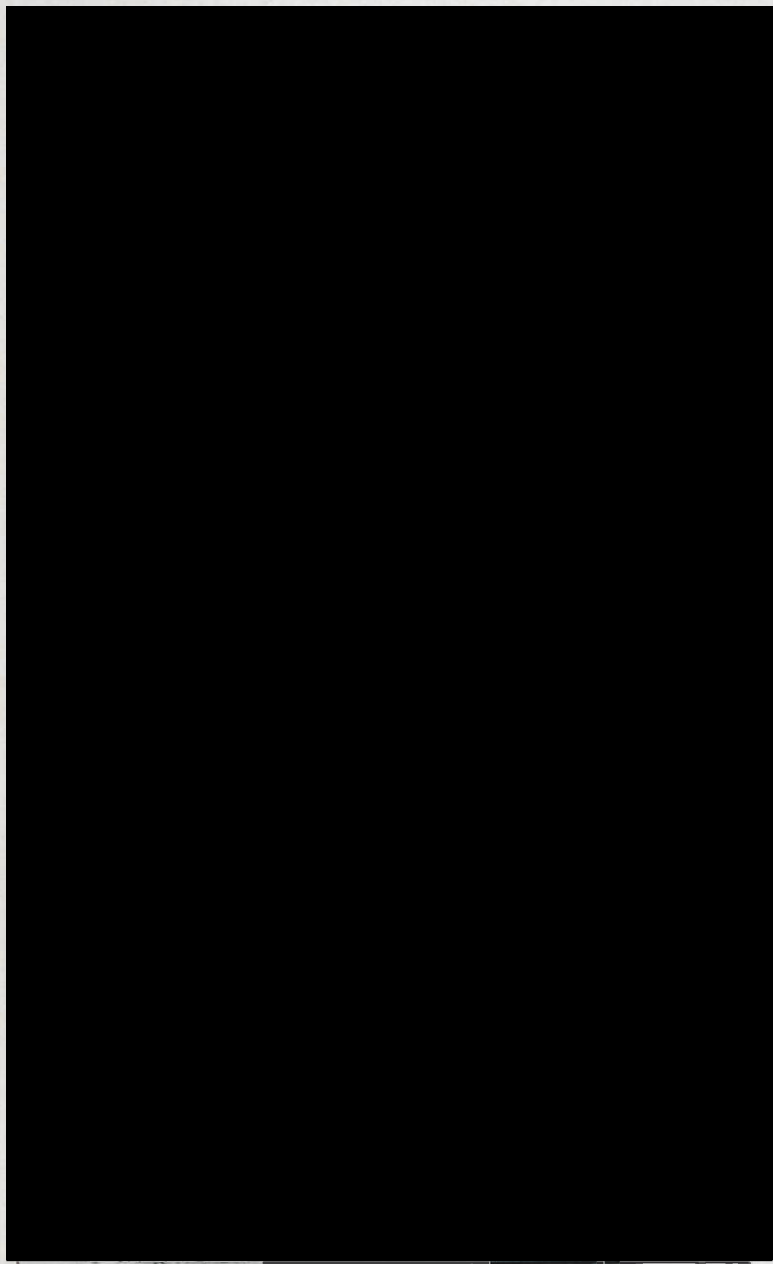
Will your activities always be limited to gallery products?

If we could find the space we would like to start a women's arts lab which would house activities in all medias (film, theatre, music, dance, etc.), where we could pool knowledge, materials, tools and experience. ○

The Women's Workshop are looking for a space at the moment and would like to hear from anyone who has ideas, suggestions, offers, etc. Write to them c/o Spare Rib.



Pauline Barrie: We must as women be extremely conscious of thinking within our time, and together be capable of predicting a future, so as to be able to accommodate ourselves to its demands, as this is the only way of reducing the hazards of being extinguished by it.



DEBORAH HALSEY STERN



Jane Low: *The Madonna of Mercy*. Two perspex discs, canvas, polythene tubing to attach bamboo pole to support.

If women
are defined as
"being confined" by
pregnancy, are they then
confined to being defined by
pregnancy?

Question WOMEN

If art is defined (as invest-
ment or "what ever"), people are
contained by this confinement; but
when art is thus confined who can
define people?

Question ART

Rob Henderson



Photograph by Diane "Hank" Olson: *Brockwell Park Loo Lady.*



Photograph by Priscilla Trench



Shelley Duval and Keith Carradine as 'Keechie' and 'Bowie'

keep in training for this, she's a spy, and she writes down all her observations in her notebook. Her best friends are Janie, who concocts amazing brews with her chemistry set and who will one day blow up the world, and Sport, who lives alone with his father, a writer, and does all the cooking and housework while his father

writes. We are concerned with the development and resolution of a double crisis in Harriet's life: Ole Golly the nursemaid, who's been with her since her birth and has been the greatest influence in her life, leaves; and Harriet's schoolfriends find her notebook with all its candid comments about them, and send her to Coventry.

Although written in the third person, the story is written from Harriet's point of view. We glean things as she gleans them - overheard conversations, peepings through keyholes, her analysis of others' behaviour. Consequently we are never in a position to patronise Harriet - we never know more than she does, and we see the adults in the strong black and white and yet incomplete terms that children do.

Harriet is a truly liberated girl. She is bold, determined and outward-going. She is interested in doing, not in being - her observations of people during her spying are in relation to herself in an inquisitive yet dispassionate way. She writes in her notebook, "Once I thought I wanted to be Franca... But she's so dull if I was her I couldn't stand myself. I guess it's not money that makes people dull. I better find out because I might be it." Unlike the stereotypical female, this is the extent of Harriet's struggle for self-awareness.

The characterisations are interesting and unusual. Harriet sees as perfectly normal her friends Janie and Sport, and the family situations of her other

Harriet the Spy



Kid's Books

Harriet The Spy written & illustrated by Louise Fitzhugh
Gollancz £1.60
American reading book for 10-12 year olds

Harriet the Spy is an exceptional book. It is an adventure story for children that presents the problems of being a child in such a sensitive and realistic manner that it is a surprise. It also has a heroine that, at last, a positive, active eleven-year-old girl can identify with.

Harriet is eleven years old, and she lives in Manhattan with her parents, the cook and her nursemaid, Ole Golly. She's going to be a writer, but right now, to

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classmates. Beth Ellen has only seen her mother once, and lives with her grandparents, Rachel's father has left, Sport's mother has left, Ole Golly marries a man who has left his wife and son. In other words, normal situations so rarely presented in children's books. Louise Fitzhugh has written a children's book which presents no stereotypes of sex-, class-, or family-roles, and for this alone it can be commended. That, further, it should be absorbing, moving and realistic recommends it highly.

**Sheila Ebbutt
CISSY**

The Sunshine Family and a Pony by Sharron Loree. Macmillan. £0.95.

This is an unusual picture book about a bunch of friends who move to a rural home from the city. (But where does the

money come from?) The relationships of the adults and the children is not the usual nuclear one. It is exciting to find that everyone has responsibility for everyone. 'We decided that everyone would clean the house and cook the food'. The children have considerable autonomy - 'All the children decided to sleep in the same room.'

Despite the sexist aspirations expressed by each character on the way to the commune, 'Pablo wanted to climb mountains, while Laura wanted a kitten', in day to day living and decision-making sex-roles are broken down. Children are full participants in this changing community: their concern for freedom is reflected in the story about a pony they are given who runs away - 'Maybe she needs to be free.'

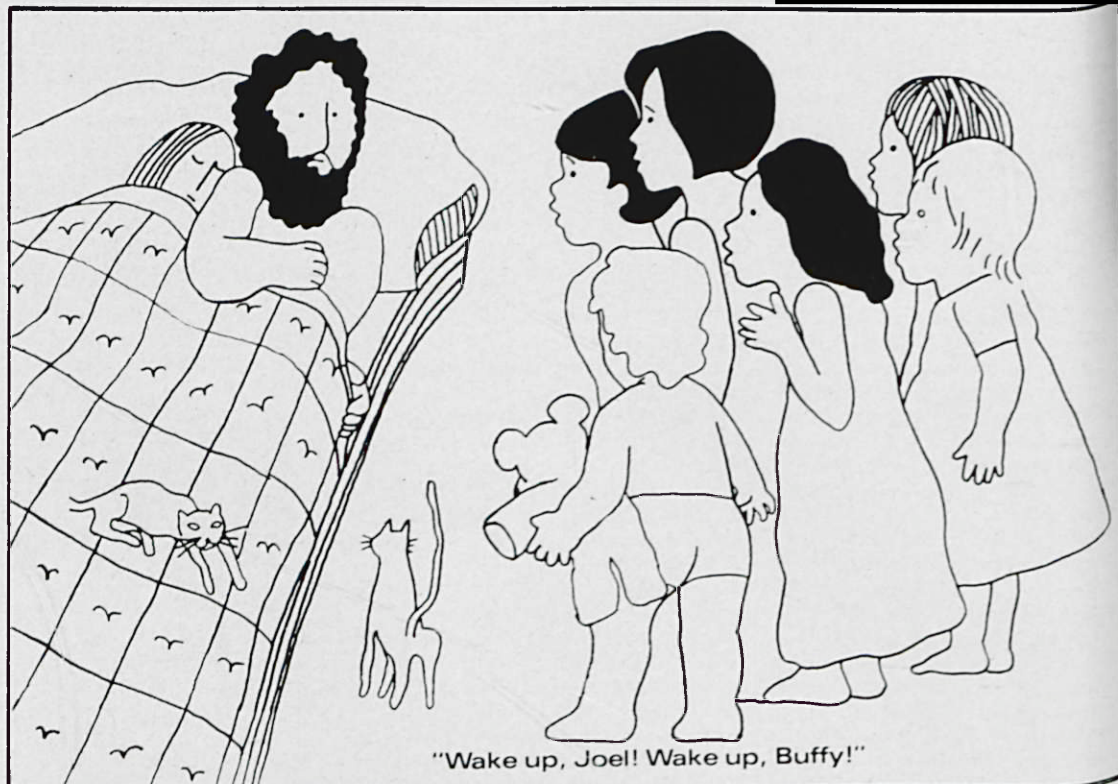
Unfortunately, the black and white illustrations are often too generalised. For instance, it is difficult to identify individual characters because of lack of detail and continuity in their faces.

But the value of this book lies in its portrayal of an alternative 'family' lifestyle.

Helen Petrie

The Children's Books Study Group

BOOKS



The Sunshine Family by Sharron Loree.





Mary Wollstonecraft, by Sir John Opie, probably painted when she was pregnant with her second child.



Mary Wollstonecraft - another version, where she is tarted up to look more like a conventional beauty.



Women in Music

Marion Fudger

Goldie Zelkowitz

Goldie Zelkowitz is conscious of many of the pressures placed upon her by the competitive values of the music world. Her individualism, ambitiousness and concept of success is the basis of her survival, for when she entered the business, the terms for a woman were rigid.

Ten years ago she started the first all woman band, Goldie and the Gingerbreads. Since then, her successes and failures have taken her through six record labels and several bands, including a ten piece jazz-rock group, Ten Wheel Drive.

Persevering still, she's now chosen to go it alone. During a recent stay in London when she appeared at our Marquee benefit, she talked about herself.

'You've been around a long time,



Women in music in the States are starting to feel more like people now but what upsets me about the women's movement there is it's almost like every woman jumped on it and they don't know really what it is. I don't like that so I don't want to attach myself to it. I had the first all girl band, there were no road managers, we carried our own stuff. I got smacked in the face many times by club owners and a lot of people in audiences for doing this so-called outrageous thing. I mean we're talking about ten years ago, it was very heavy but I kept on trucking man. I think if you fight for something you believe in - I'm not saying that a woman should have to fight that hard, d'you understand? I'm not saying that, but you have to know what it means before you say, 'Yea right on Women's Liberation'. These people have to admit that they want to be a whole person instead of half a one, I don't want to be equal with men, they are as unequal as we are. I dig being a woman but if I've got something to offer, I don't want to be choked or made to feel like a freak.

I've noticed that English men want their women to be behind, yet they expect American women to be strong. It's like 'Your sister can but my sister

can't' - that kind of trip, it's like a guy going round screwing every chick he sees, except nobody can touch his sister, that's how English dudes are with their women here. But in America, they expect it of the English, that's why when English groups come over and they're really freaky, it's expected. The grass is greener on the other side all the time.

Then you have a lot of women in the States who turn around and say 'I want to stay at home and cater to my husband' but maybe that's because she doesn't feel she has anything to offer, she has to use her mind instead of her body (and I dig both). We're brought up that way, I was brought up that way too, nobody ever suggested I should be a musician, never, it was always 'just wait till you get married'.

When I was a kid and had the boyfriend scene and all that, I was kept very strict and very much in the house so I had a lot of thinking to do. And I knew I wanted to do something with my life because what was happening was very boring, I'd like to talk to a lot of other women and see what happened with them and see if maybe there's some connection. My parents were pushing me to get married, push, push, push, my mother still to this day tells me to get married and I say 'Why ma?' and she says 'Cos I wanna see you happy' so I said 'Ma, I am happy' and she says 'You can't be happy alone'. I come from Poland so I've got very old fashioned parents - if you're not married by ten then you're an old maid - well I'm exaggerating but my mother tried to get me married off when I was sixteen. Fighting hard is not the word for it. I would have had two brothers but they died in the war in Poland, you see we're Jewish and I think it would have been different if my brothers had lived. I think the pressure would have been off me, I think they were very strict with me because there were no boys around. One of them got shot at fourteen and the other one died of hunger, I wasn't born then, I think my mother was pregnant with me or something. I can never get the story straight because every time I talk to my mother about it she cries, it's something she'll never forget, she was in concentration camps.



So this new album is called Goldie Zelkowitz because my father died whilst I was making it and as there were no sons, I wanted to have his name on it, so I used Zelkowitz. That's my real name but I had three albums out under the name of Genya Raven, the name I used with Ten Wheel Drive. Genya is my Polish name, so I'm really Genya Zelkowitz - right? And Americanised it was Goldie, on my citizenship papers and on my driver's licence it's Goldie.

It's very difficult in the record business, everyone's trying to lay another trip on you, they talk about image and what image you should have, well that's bullshit. I really don't think that the people out there are that insecure that they have to attach on to something. It bothers me because it means they're trying to classify me or something, well I hate it. People say to me, 'You've been around a long time, Jesus Christ you should have made it by now' well I did, everybody's hip to me in the business, anyway what do you call making it? So then I get, 'Nobody knows what to do with you, you're multi-talented and that's why'. Well are you telling me that because I want to be an

actress and I want to be an entertainer and because I'm into comedy and I don't go round with a needle in my arm that I cannot make it? Are you telling me that my image is too this or too that - what are you trying to tell me? Then I get this: 'O.K. you looking for material, what style, who do you sound like?' That's how fucked up everything is. Dig this: they say 'What kind of bag are you looking into?' so I say 'Good material' and they say 'O.K. but R & B, jazz?' So I say 'Good material, I sing jazz, R & B, country and western, rock. . . ' You see? Then it's 'Boy Genya Raven sounds just like Janis Joplin, every review, everybody has got to relate me to something, they can't find an image for me so they got to relate me to Janis Joplin. Now, are you ready for this? Guess who it is now, Suzie Quatro! Now the woman who wrote that explained to me that the only way to get something in the paper was to relate me to something. She said 'Well you haven't been here for seven years and a lot of kids don't know who you are so I've got to attach you to something.' Well, I would rather it wasn't in the paper, that could start a very bad trip for me, because if they're into Suzie Quatro and they come to see me perform, they're

topless, so much more money but I would never prostitute myself like that. I always made sure that we did look like ladies when we performed because we weren't chicks that were deformed and that's why we picked up an instrument, we happened to be women who were playing instruments and we were proud of it.

I was asked a question yesterday, 'How do you feel when you're on stage?' and I gotta say that I feel mixed, I don't feel male or female, it's just a kind of good giving feeling. But I never want to look like a guy. I like the word woman, not many people use it but if I had to describe myself and how I feel, that's it. Do you realise that I've been on Sceptre, Atlantic, Polydor, Dunhill, Columbia and Chess Janus - six labels. When there has been so many transitions in the music eras that I've been through, what am I supposed to do, die after the first era? You stay on top of it and you grow, you don't stay in one place. If I'd had an image seven years ago, I would have been stuck, I would have been dead. I get those feelings about running away sometimes but I know I'm supposed to do what I do, not because I'm a prisoner of it, it's a love for it, it's all the bullshit around me that

chick that's in jail and the guy who put her there, it's called 'Get It Back' but that didn't happen to me. I did get busted but not because of a guy. It's the way I would think in that situation.

I am always vulnerable, I dig where I'm at, I dig my hang ups, my ups, my downs, crying, feeling, I'm not covering myself at all, I'm not building a wall around me. If I'm gonna get hurt then I'm gonna feel it, I feel that we were given nerves and I want to use every one of them. 'Walking' one of the tracks on this album is about my friends, I don't care what anybody links me to, I know what I am and I happen to love people, which doesn't make me straight and it doesn't make me gay. You can't please everybody and I'm either gonna get dug for it or I'm not. What is important is you. I've got so much more to grow, ten years is nothing, I've got much more to learn. I'll never be a teacher though, always a learner, the only thing I can teach about is something I've already passed through but it's an experience, not a lesson because everybody reacts differently to different situations. It's those people who say, 'Me, I'm never wrong' those are the people who never learn. I went to a shrink one time and she said to

Jesus you shoulda made it by now'



and the Gingerbreads 1964

gonna dislike me. People say as long as you take up space and as long as you're mentioned, that's the thing but that is wrong, that's what's fucked me up.

We used to get that attitude, 'Well, they're not bad for girls' all the time, it's strange, I happened to have enjoyed walking into a club with the Gingerbreads and guys staring as if to say, 'They'll never do it.' But you see, you've got to back it up, you gotta work double hard. O.K. there's been a lot of mediocre male bands that have made it but when you're a female band, you can't be mediocre because immediately you're gonna get knocked, you have got to be great, that's where the pressure lies. I hate that but it made me a better singer and it made those musicians better, that pressure made that group a very fine group, you shoulda heard them. Ginger and Carol have formed a group called Isis but they're just ruining themselves, like on their album cover, they're nude, it's so depressing. Then I heard they made a promotional film of them making it with each other, they shout that they're confirmed lesbians, well I think they're doing it all wrong. We had millions of offers to do

makes me want to disappear.

I'd like to find a little club in London and stay there for a few weeks and make myself available and have musicians come and sit in. What pisses me off is the thousands of dollars that are around me, all the recording studios and their toys and I've got to worry about my fucking rent! Where's all that money that they're saying is for Genya Raven or for Goldie? How come my manager got twenty percent of it all and the guys that are on salary in the companies get theirs and the road managers and the sound guy is getting five hundred a night, how come I got to worry about my rent?

It's gotten so out of hand but it'll get back to the beginning again, it's starting already, New York has got a few clubs, I'd like to help make sure it gets back. The record companies would certainly save a lot of money because today, even to work a club like the Troubadour or the Bottom Line in New York City, the record company has to give the group some money because the club won't pay enough. It's one vicious circle. The Pink Floyd get thirty grand for one night in the States, that's another thing, the English make a lot of money over there.

Goldie and the Gingerbreads were good but America could never see a woman's band, yet when we came to England, we were a smash but remember what I said about the grass is greener? We split up after six years, a long time and a lot of music transition. Acid rock had just come in and we just came to a dead halt. We were a copy band, that's what they did in those days and then we came over here and did 'Can't You Hear My Heart Beat' that's when the original material thing started. I've written three songs on this new album and some things on my last album, I wrote with Ten Wheel Drive too. I'm a lyricist really but sometimes I write the music and I play harmonica and drums. At the beginning you write songs about things that happen to you but after a while you begin to take other people's situations. Like I wrote about being in love when I wasn't and one of the things on the most recent album is about a



1966

me, 'Listen, you're very lucky that you're growing, I'm sure your mother's still a child.' It's coping, it's called coping, you know we're only one time on this earth, use it, use all your emotions, try to do everything, don't let anybody put you in a bag. It's exciting when you think about it. By doing that it'll help other women do it too. I get depressed sometimes too, I'm not sitting here like queen bee but then I say to myself, 'Schmuck, you're on your sixth label, that means someone out there digs you.' Sometimes you got to hit yourself because you forget you have anything to offer. I'm just telling you my experience.

I don't like to hurt people but there's very few guys will respect what I'm into, maybe they will be o.k. for a few days but after that they try to take over my trip or push me into theirs. I've had guys who after a few days said, 'It's either the business or me' and they'd get really angry if I wanted to have breakfast with friends after a gig. Like, 'How could I want to talk business at this hour' or, 'Why can't I come home and unwind there?' They just don't understand. But guys want that freedom - it's not even a matter of freedom, it's just a matter of a woman being into something, isn't it? □

EYEWITNESS NEWS by BEVERLY GRANT

*I heard a woman screamin' on the second floor
The sound of slaps and thuds came flyin' through her door
Though some who passed by felt some pity for her life
Nobody stopped to help cause she was someone's wife.*

*The woman in 4s is crying every night
Her husband comes home high and always starts a fight
He's much respected on the block for being cool
Why, ain't no woman living could make him a fool.*

*Two girls got raped the other night a block away
One guy said 'probably they weren't virgins anyway'
Assaulted 6 or 7 times by different guys
But not one heard his sister in the poor girls' cries.*

*A woman tried to kill herself right down the street
Her landlord's very rich, but he don't give no heat.
They caught her stealing food to feed her kids one day
The court judged her unfit and took her kids away.*

*A woman stabbed her husband dead in self-defense
She said he stabbed her first and pleaded innocence
You're guilty said the judge behind his lofty stand
For trying to take the law into your own hand.*

*Each time I look around I feel a woman's pain
Just like a razor's edge it cuts into my vein
The blood comes gushing forth and it begins to build
A raging torment growing and it can't be stilled.*



Bev Grant lives in New York State, in a collective with her group, 'The Human Condition', their friends and children. She has been playing folk guitar for years and comes from a poor white family in Portland, Oregon.

In New York, Bev became involved with political groups, as well as working on her music; in fact they are not separate.

Bev worked with two women in a womens band, "Goldflower". They wrote their own material and matched their often feminist songs with country and western sounds. One of the songs written at that time was 'I'm Tired Of Bastards Fucking Over Me', still a great favourite when the new band plays it at the end of their sets.

The chorus goes:-

*They whistle for me like a dog,
They make noises like a hog,
Heaven knows they sure got problems, I agree;*

*But their problems I can't solve
When my sanity's involved,
So I'm tired of bastards fucking over me.*

Coming out of a commitment to social

change for all people, women, poor whites and blacks, Bev sees her songs as a way to spread a consciousness of the changes that have already happened and that need to happen.

Other members of the band, who are all at this time men, also write songs. They work hard at the music, using the rich folk, country and blues traditions of American music. They make themselves available, free, for benefits, and make some money from gigs around the city and in New York. They are working on a record, believing that they should be heard by as wide a range of people as possible, not staying within a narrow 'movement' circuit. It is hard and compromising to have to deal with the world of records but they are determined, they sound great and they have important things to say.

It's impossible to get over the feeling of their performances. This was written by a friend who now lives in London. I brought the words of their songs into Spare Rib to see if some could be published. I miss hearing them!

Nina Hutchison

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Li-Shuangshuang

GOADS XIWANG INTO ACTION



168. Shuangshuang picked up Xiao Ju and said quietly to Xiwang, "The family can't do without you! Xiwang could not say a word."



169. That night when Xiao Ju was fast asleep, Shuangshuang took out a new pair of cotton shoes and handed them to Xiwang. "Put them on and see if they fit." Xiwang put them on, looked at his new shoes and then at Shuangshuang, and smiled simply and honestly.



170. Shuangshuang sighed softly. "You fellows, as soon as you're out of the door you stay away several months... but as for us, not a day passed without our going to the edge of the village to see if you were returning!" Xiwang, staring at his new shoes, replied, "Don't say any more. I feel very bad about it. I want to apologize to you all!"



171. Shuangshuang's words struck home and Xiwang was lost in thought. Then he hesitantly asked, "Say, how long does it take before a man can finally get rid of his selfishness?" Shuangshuang replied, "That depends on how fast he raises his political consciousness; I guess there are quite a few people now who are not very selfish."



172. Xiwang shook his head. "It's not as simple as that; I've seen people who are still selfish stealthily making a profit out of the public." Shuangshuang realized that there was more to this than met the eye, and rather than offend him, she simply smiled and said, "Who stealthily makes a profit out of the public good?"



173. Xiwang was silent for a moment but in the end could not help but tell her how Jin Qiao and Sun You had transported the melons and divided the proceeds privately between themselves. Shuangshuang could not hide her irritation and shouted, "Huh! While the others were working their guts out at home, that's the sort of thing you were doing outside the village!"



174. Xiwang hurriedly explained that he himself had had no part in it, but Shuangshuang harshly asked, "If you only look after your own actions and pay no attention to those of others, are you a commune member? We produce collectively—even a single blade of grass has all our sweat on it!"



175. At this Xiwang began to sweat all over. "Well, well, what am I supposed to do about it?" Shuangshuang said. "Do! Do the same as I did! Put up a big-character poster!"



176. The next day, a new big-character poster appeared in the village street.

Big-character Poster

Uncle Sun You and younger brother Jin Qiao! Xiwang is not going to mince words with you today. It is not right. I can't go on covering for you about the business of the melons. If you don't make a clean breast of it, I'm going to bring it out into the open.

Sun Xiwang

People gathered in front of it and began discussing it. Some said, "Oh, another fresh scandal is coming out!" Others said, "Ugh, Xiwang can express opinions too!"

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12	Memories of my mother-in-law	Clarke, Merlin	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Memories of my mother-in-law. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
12	Mother-in-law	Gotobed, Rob	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Mother-in-law. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
12	Granfather, grandmother, first of three girls of family		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Granfather, grandmother, first of three girls of family. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
12	Mothers mother and father		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Mothers mother and father. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
13	Memories of my mother-in-law	Clarke, Merlin	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Memories of my mother-in-law. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
13	infant		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for infant. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
14	On the Bench	Carne, Roz	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for On the Bench. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
14	Photograph	Cook, Martin	Usage Terms: © Martin Cook. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
15	On the Bench	Carne, Roz	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for On the Bench. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
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15	Photograph	Cook, Martin	research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
16	Sexism in school		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Sexism in school. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
16	1870. Education for all - A mixed lesson in a board school		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for 1870. Education for all - A mixed lesson in a board school. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
17	Women workers and the TUC	Boston, Sarah	Usage Terms: © Sarah Boston
17	women workers	Mullen, Michael Ann	Usage Terms: © Michael Ann Mullen
18	Women workers and the TUC	Boston, Sarah	Usage Terms: © Sarah Boston
18	B A Gillman	Davies, Chris	Usage Terms: © Chris Davies (enquiries@arenapal.com). This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
18	Katie Doyle	Davies, Chris	Usage Terms: © Chris Davies (enquiries@arenapal.com). This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
19	Women workers and the TUC	Boston, Sarah	Usage Terms: © Sarah Boston
19	Marie Patterson, TUC General Council	Davies, Chris	Usage Terms: © Chris Davies (enquiries@arenapal.com). This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
19	Believe and you will conquer	AS	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Believe and you will conquer. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
19	Article		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Article. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
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22	Dora Russell	Potter, Billet	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Dora Russell. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
22	notice of demonstration about Troops in Ireland		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for notice of demonstration about Troops in Ireland. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
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23	Gay Liberation and the Medical Establishment		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Gay Liberation and the Medical Establishment. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
23	Front of building of British Medical Association, London	Mullen, Michael Ann	Usage Terms: © Michael Ann Mullen
24	Gay Liberation and the Medical Establishment	Carne, Roz	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Gay Liberation and the Medical Establishment. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
24	Gay Liberation and the Medical Establishment	Bradford Lesbian Group	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Gay Liberation and the Medical Establishment. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
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25	Cleaners Strike at Vauxhall's		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Cleaners Strike at Vauxhall's. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
25	Picketing for Equal Pay		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Picketing for Equal Pay. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
25	Apex Ban Temps		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Apex Ban Temps. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
25	Leeds: Fascism and Sexual Freedom		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Leeds: Fascism and Sexual Freedom. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
26	Leeds: Fascism and Sexual Freedom		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Leeds: Fascism and Sexual Freedom. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
26	Nursery Workers: posters and meetings		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Nursery Workers: posters and meetings. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
26	Kittens for the Boss		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Kittens for the Boss. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
26	More about the TUC		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for More about the TUC. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
26	Dr Judith Gray	Davies, Chris	Usage Terms: © Chris Davies (enquiries@arenapal.com). This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
27	The ones that got away	Fairbairns, Zoe	Usage Terms: © Zoe Fairbairns
28	Spare Rib takes on the media		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Spare Rib takes on the media. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.

28	Six Sexy Girls in London's Naughty Square Mile!	Scott, Ann	Usage Terms: © Ann Scott. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
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28	Marlon Brando		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Marlon Brando. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
28	Lou Reed		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Lou Reed. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
30	Short List		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for this item. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
30	The Recruiting Officer by the Belt and Braces Roadshow Company	French, Betty	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for The Recruiting Officer by the Belt and Braces Roadshow Company. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
31	Marriage, Divorce and the Family by David Nichols	Russell, Marguerite	Usage Terms: © Marguerite Russell. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
31	Meet the First Lady of Feet Street; Ms Julie		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Meet the First Lady of Feet Street; Ms Julie. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
33	Advice, info, odds and sods		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Advice, info, odds and sods. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
34	Vaginismus	Mattison, Jo	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Vaginismus. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
35	Vaginismus	Mattison, Jo	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Vaginismus. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.

36	Anne Day; works representative in Stoke-on-Trent pottery	Phillips, Angela	Usage Terms: © Angela Phillips. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
37	Women's Workshop of the Artists Union		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Women's Workshop of the Artists Union. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
37	Women's Workshop of the Artists Union		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Women's Workshop of the Artists Union. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
38	Women's Workshop of the Artists Union; Mary O'Shea writes about her collage		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Women's Workshop of the Artists Union; Mary O'Shea writes about her collage. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
38	Plastic bags, acetate. By Mary O'Shea		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Plastic bags, acetate. By Mary O'Shea. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
38	Women's Workshop of the Artists Union; FAQs about the exhibition		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Women's Workshop of the Artists Union; FAQs about the exhibition. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
38	artwork by Pauline Barrie		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for artwork by Pauline Barrie. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
39	The Madonna of Mercy by Jane Low		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for The Madonna of Mercy by Jane Low. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
39	Arts		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for this item. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
39	Two faces arms intertwined	Stern, Deborah Halsey	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Two faces arms intertwined. Please contact copyright@bl.uk

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39	Question women question art	Henderson, Rob	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Question women question art. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
40	Sonia Knox writes about her work		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Sonia Knox writes about her work. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
40	Brockwell Park Loo Lady	Olson, Diane	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Brockwell Park Loo Lady. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
40	bike with bottles	Trench, priscilla	Usage Terms: © Priscilla Trench. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
41	Shelley Duval and Keith Carradine as 'Keechie' and Bowie		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Shelley Duval and Keith Carradine as 'Keechie' and Bowie. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
41	Harriet the Spy by Louise Fitzhugh Gollancz	Cissy, Sheila Ebbutt	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Harriet the Spy by Louise Fitzhugh Gollancz. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
41	Harriet the Spy		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Harriet the Spy . Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
42	Harriet the Spy, Cont'd	Cissy, Sheila Ebbutt	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Harriet the Spy, Cont'd. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
42	The Sunshine Family and a Pony by Sarron Loree	Petit, Helen	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for The Sunshine Family and a Pony by Sarron Loree. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
42	"Wake up Joel! Wake up Buffy!" from The Sunshine Family	Loree, Sharron	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for "Wake up Joel! Wake up Buffy!" from The Sunshine Family . Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information

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42	All the children decided to sleep in the same room' from The Sunshine Family	Loree, Sharron	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for All the children decided to sleep in the same room' from The Sunshine Family. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
44	Goldie Zelkowitz	Fudger, Marion	Usage Terms: © (now) Marion Gilbert
44	Goldie Zelkowitz 1974		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Goldie Zelkowitz 1974. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
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45	Goldie Zelkowitz and the Gingerbreads 1964		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Goldie Zelkowitz and the Gingerbreads 1964. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
45	Goldie Zelkowitz 1966		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Goldie Zelkowitz 1966. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
46	Eyewitness News by Beverley Grant	Hutchinson, Nina	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Eyewitness News by Beverley Grant. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
47	Li-Shuangshuang goads Xiwang into action		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Li-Shuangshuang goads Xiwang into action. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.